

# COLLEGE ENGLISH

VOLUME 21

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NUMBER 6

On the Organic Structure of *Walden* • The Care and Feeding of English Departments • To Grade or Retrograde? • The Possibilities of Christian Tragedy • The Antioch Program in Literature • A Practical Definition of Irony • Teaching Loads in Connecticut and Pennsylvania • Ishmael to Ahab

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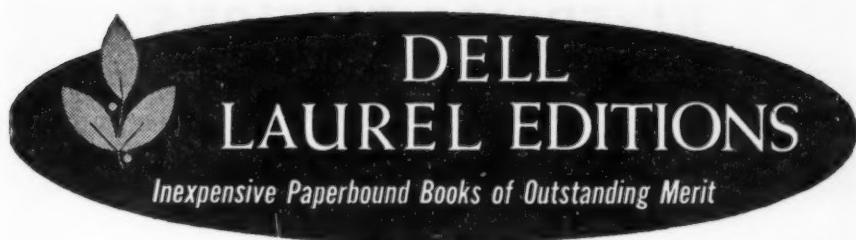
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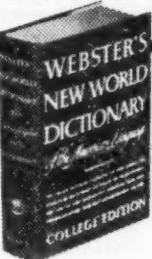
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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 21

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Number 4

## On the Organic Structure of *Walden*

LAURIAT LANE, JR.

An assistant professor at Cornell, Dr. Lane has published major articles on "The Literary Archetype," on Huckleberry Finn (in *College English*, 1955), and on Dickens (in *PMLA*), and has an anthology of Dickens criticism (with George H. Ford) forthcoming. His degrees are all from Harvard.

The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form.<sup>1</sup>

To speak of the organic form of *Walden* is hardly novel or startling, but to pursue more closely some of the phrase's implications for our response to the work may still be worth while. We may start with Coleridge's statement, whose relevance to Thoreau and to *Walden* has already been well established, especially by Fred W. Lorch and F. O. Matthiessen.<sup>2</sup> In his discussion of "Coleridge's Mechanical Fancy and Organic Imagination" M. H. Abrams finds five propositions characteristic of the organic theory: "(1) The plant originates in a seed . . . . (2) The plant grows . . . . (3) Growing, the plant assimilates to its own substance the alien and diverse elements of earth, air, light, and water . . . . (4) The plant evolves spontaneously from an internal source of energy . . . and organizes itself into its proper form . . . . (5) The achieved structure of a

plant is an organic unity."<sup>3</sup> Of these propositions, (4) and (5) apply to the completed work of art, the first reflecting Coleridge's term "innate," the second his emphasis on "fullness of development."

In his section "Walden: Craftsmanship vs. Technique" Matthiessen demonstrates the book's innate form, how it "develops itself from within," and concludes that Thoreau has mastered "the right order of the thing to be made, the right revelation of the material" (p. 175). But the scope of Matthiessen's total argument does not allow him to explore fully the meaning of the term organic form for *Walden*. The truly organic form not only fulfills the inner needs of the material to be expressed, but fulfills it with a complexity and even multiplicity not attained by more artificial or conventional forms. *Walden* demonstrates its organic nature by its multiple form; to examine this multiple form more closely is to come to see *Walden's* greatness as a complex yet integrated work of art.

*Walden* also exemplifies Professor Abrams's first three propositions. We may find the seeds of the book in Thoreau's early attachment to the pond and in

<sup>1</sup>Coleridge's *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas M. Raynor (1930), I, 224.

<sup>2</sup>"Thoreau and the Organic Principle in Poetry," *PMLA*, LIII (1939), 286-302; "The Organic Principle," *American Renaissance* (1941), Ch. IV.

<sup>3</sup>*The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), pp. 171-174.

the fact that his resolution to live by it was expressed years before he could carry it out. We may see the book's growth not only in the materials in the Journals but in the seven versions of the manuscript analyzed in J. Lyndon Shanley's *The Making of Walden* (1957). And we may see, in even the most summary list of *Walden's* sources, what "alien and diverse elements" Thoreau has assimilated.

We may consider the organic or multiple form of the completed work of art — of the *Walden* that most general readers, who may have read neither the Journals nor Professor Shanley's reconstruction, know — as texture and structure. Considering each of these in turn, we will find the complexity and multiplicity of organic form. We will find not a form but a set of forms, all of them innate in Coleridge's sense, and all of them merging to produce the one final form, the work itself.

The texture of *Walden*, usually considered under the general heading of Thoreau's style, has been treated at some length by various commentators. Krutch, Cook, and Matthiessen especially have discussed Thoreau's choice of words and the shape of his sentences, the basic elements of style.<sup>4</sup> His characteristic richness of allusion has been universally noted, especially by those studies which deal with his sources,<sup>5</sup> although the precise rhetorical purpose and force of this richness have yet to be defined. And critics have begun to explore, though they have hardly exhausted, the symbolic complexity of Thoreau's use of such recurring images and metaphors as sound, light, water, morning, the sun, the stars, and others.<sup>6</sup> This texture of

style, allusion, and symbol, with the range and force it gives Thoreau's style and the demands it makes on the reader's whole sensibility, clearly grows organically out of and fulfills Thoreau's wish to wake his neighbors and readers up to how they were leading their lives and how they should lead them. Clearly, too, it does support the structure of *Walden* by providing what Lorch calls "a centrality of mood" (p. 292). But the real structure of *Walden*, that "harmonious relation of parts to the whole and of the whole to its parts" which Lorch, in the same passage, says *Walden* and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* lack, lies elsewhere.

This real structure has been recognized by critics since Lorch but has not been fully analyzed. Matthiessen wishes more to prove that such a structure exists than to examine it in any detail, confining his analysis to noting the relation and transitions between the individual sections and noting the seasonal pattern, Thoreau's "poem of the seasons or myth of the year" (p. 169). Krutch finds only that "the structural units are topical, the whole is actually an exposition rather than a narrative" (p. 95); Cook, that "there is a sense of compositional effect . . . a harmony of the separate objects in a total effect . . . a sense of the essential beauty of nature when realized as a composition" (p. 210). Only Shanley considers at any length the presence in *Walden* of a set of structural patterns, which he calls chronicle, topical essay, and persuasive argument, and shows by a survey of the contents of the

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, *Henry David Thoreau* (1948), pp. 263-275; Reginald L. Cook, *Passage to Walden* (1949), pp. 212-231; *American Renaissance*, pp. 83-99.

<sup>5</sup>See especially Edith Seybold, *Thoreau: the Quest and the Classics* (1951), and Joseph Jones, *Index to Walden* (1955).

<sup>6</sup>For sound see Sherman Paul, "The Wise Silence: Sound as Agency of Correspondence in Thoreau," *NEQ*, XII (1949), 511-527; for spring and morning see John C. Broderick, "Imagery in *Walden*," *University of Texas Studies in English*, XXXIII (1954), 80-89; for sun and natural rebirth see Stanley Edgar Hyman, "Henry Thoreau in Our Time," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXVIII (November 1946), 137-146, reprinted in *Thoreau: A Century of Criticism*, ed. Walter Harding (1954).

book both how these three patterns alternate and combine and how Thoreau revised and developed *Walden* to establish them more firmly (pp. 76-82).<sup>7</sup>

One cause of the unwillingness of some critics to recognize or admit that *Walden* has any real structure was undoubtedly Thoreau's own unwillingness to make things easy for the reader, his reluctance to have *Walden* require anything less than what he said all good reading should require, "the steady intention almost of the whole life." We can see this reluctance in so slight a matter as *Walden's* lack of chapter numbers. The casual reader may choose to take this lack as Thoreau's confession that the book is fragmentary, a mere collection of essays on several topics grouped around a central subject. But the athletic reader, to borrow Thoreau's phrase, may see in the lack of numbers a hint, even a challenge, to ignore mere mechanical sequence and seek for some more elaborate and meaningful pattern of movement or movements. He will find them even on a first reading, but even more as he comes to feel on repeated readings the total shape and complexity of the structure of the book.

First, *Walden* takes on, from Thoreau's arrangement of its sections, what we may call absolute form. That is to say, this arrangement has an overall shape and symmetry mainly separate from the specific content and function of each individual section. After a long introduction, these sections gather themselves, for various purposes, in two groups roughly balanced around a longer central section, "The Ponds." Each

<sup>7</sup>In "Resolution at Walden," *Accent*, XII (1953), 101-113, and in *The Shores of America* (1958), pp. 293-353 (published after this article was written), Sherman Paul writes of spiritual autobiography and literary self-expression more than of artistic structure and effect, and writes more from Thoreau's point of view than from the reader's, but his discussion of Thoreau's "fable of the renewal of life" (p. 293) is detailed, thorough, and suggestive.

group anchors in a section especially essential to the point and purpose of the whole book, the first taking its start with "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," the second coming to rest in *Walden's* "Conclusion." Whether we find this form analogous to the arching, multi-pathed rainbow, in whose "very abutment" Thoreau once stood, to "one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us," or to the pure parabola of mathematics, clearly the form does give a basic aesthetic satisfaction. And this form, with its hint of forward movement and of changing direction, to this extent mirrors *Walden's* central purpose.

Second, *Walden* has narrative movement. It takes the reader through a sequence in time, and although Thoreau often moves outside the limits of his two years and two months at the pond and at the same time, for convenience and economy and for symbolic purposes, condenses the two years into one, he retains a basic, linear, chronological pattern. He sometimes expresses this pattern by alluding to the season, sometimes by citing the month and even at critical points the date. Thus, in spite of the obviously topical arrangement of the first half of the book and the obvious typicality of many of the activities Thoreau narrates, the basic chronology remains in force and gives a second, vital shape to the book, vital because it reaffirms our faith in that healthy, deliberate progress of time organic to the world of nature but too often accelerated by man in his world beyond all due proportion. Thoreau finds this organic time embodied everywhere in nature, and on this time, as we shall see, he bases his myth of spiritual rebirth.

Third, in *Walden* Thoreau is obviously trying not only to narrate the story of his sojourn at the pond but to present to the reader a body of information about the two worlds of man and of nature, information both useful and

meaningful. Thus, the sections of the book are so arranged as to give us facts in the right expository order, for important expository purposes.

What makes "Economy" over twice as long as any other section of *Walden* is, more than anything else, its special expository purpose. In this, his opening, introductory section, Thoreau has to put forth much crucial information. The basic facts of his stay at the pond, many details about his way of life there that he will later treat more expansively and suggestively, information about his previous existence, practical advice on how to go about building a cabin—all this and more Thoreau gives to the reader, to inform him and thereby to equip him to read further in *Walden*. Some of this information, no doubt, Thoreau intended ironically, to answer those pertinent impertinent questions asked him by his more literal-minded neighbors. He has assumed some of his circumstantiality to suit the circumstantial minds of his questioners. But his "statistics," as he says, do, "as they have a certain completeness, have a certain value also." For they give *Walden*, from the beginning, the actuality needed to make it a true reading of life, a grounding in expository detail to keep it from being, as some captious critics might complain, mere prophecy, mere poetry.

"Where I Lived and What I Lived For" is one of the three pivotal sections of *Walden*, the other two being, as we have already seen, "The Ponds" and "Conclusion." Thus its expository purpose, less vital to its force as literature than its rhetorical and mythic ones, is submerged within them. Yet Thoreau does, in the short opening part of the section, remind us with the story of his past farm-hunting of some of the more literal terms of his decision, characteristically complicated by his final "possession" of each purchase. In the body of the section, in spite of the dominant note of rhetorical challenge and of prepara-

tion for mythic adventure, he does complete his factual background and begins, in some small ways, to expose his central subject, to "burrow" for "reality."

The sections between "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" and "The Ponds" deal with six specific topics, each important for our literal understanding of *Walden*. They tell us Thoreau's main activities at Walden and the principles behind them. Now that we are fully aware of Thoreau's basic situation, these sections extend our knowledge in six important directions. "The Ponds" completes Thoreau's exposition of his typical summer world and expands our information about the ponds into other seasons and other years, thereby preparing us for the later sections. These later sections, between "The Ponds" and "Conclusion," develop in several ways from the first half of the book. They take every chance offered by *Walden's* narrative movement to treat again such earlier topics as Thoreau's habits, his walks, his visitors, his animal neighbors, and even co-tenants, and the ever-present, ever-changing pond: all of them in the new context of the different seasons, especially winter; some of them, as in "Brute Neighbors," with an intenser focus gained from greater familiarity. Some topics, such as "Former Inhabitants," are properly taken up now because the special circumstances of winter life justify them. In all these ways, in short, *Walden* shows its expository order.

To turn to *Walden's* fourth and fifth patterns of movement, the rhetorical and the mythic, is to change modes of expression radically. For narrative and exposition of essentially factual and autobiographical matter, no matter how well ordered, belong to assertive, nonfictional prose; but rhetorical appeals and the creation of myth belong to imaginative prose. To put it another way, factual narrative and exposition direct us centrifugally toward real experience;

rhetoric and myth direct us centripetally toward literary experience.<sup>8</sup> *Walden's* ordered narrative and expository movement we see and accept; to *Walden's* ordered rhetorical and mythic movement we react and respond.

As literary expression, moreover, *Walden's* rhetoric and myth, as we shall see, relate closely to each other, far more closely than they relate to the expository and narrative patterns, or to the absolute form. They are almost two ways of looking at the same literary effect: one, the myth, the content of *Walden's* meaning; one, the rhetoric, the means by which the verbal images, symbols, and gestures of the myth come to the reader. Yet both rhetoric and myth also grow organically out of the absolute form of *Walden's* most basic shape and out of the progressive yet cyclical movement of its narrative and the literal, factual matter of its exposition.

In "Economy" Thoreau catches our attention rhetorically by humbly stating that it is our curiosity he answers, that he speaks at our request and not his own insistence. He disarms us, too, by confessing freely and frankly his egotism and egoism. He appeals not to our dreams and impracticalities, he says, but to something much more stable, to our business sense, our economy. Thereby, as well as by the immediate and continuing appeal and challenge of his style itself, he at once gains a hold on our thoughts and feelings. Next, given this hold, he begins to vex us with problems. Much of the autobiography in "Economy" challenges us by its novelty and by the ambiguous tone in which Thoreau presents it. Moreover, by treating so fully his own four necessities—Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel—he not only queries our ordering of our material life but

<sup>8</sup>For this distinction I am indebted to Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), pp. 73-74. I should also like to acknowledge several helpful suggestions by Stephen E. Whicher.

attacks our materiality itself as false and unreal, thereby bringing us, though we may not yet realize it, already face to face with one of *Walden's* essential meanings. Finally, by his apparent digression on philanthropy, Thoreau anticipates a fundamental objection to his whole way of life and to *Walden* and answers it before it can harm his purpose.

*Walden* sets forth not one but two myths—of entry into nature and of rebirth through nature. In "Economy" Thoreau tells how he first entered the world of nature and hints of the rebirth to come. Not only is Thoreau's initial move to the side of Walden Pond an essential step, but as he discusses how men should order their lives, he supports his myth by praising the natural against the artificial whenever possible. In his use of images of growth and of moulting and shedding and in his short description of the spring during which he built his cabin, a single paragraph that looks forward to *Walden's* climax, Thoreau foreshadows his myth of rebirth and regeneration, which he and the reader can only re-enact after they have become as fully a part of nature as possible. At the same time, through such symbolic details as the materials for his cabin, Thoreau warns us that both myths are myth and not reality, that man must compromise and make adjustments, that he can commit himself to nature emotionally and even spiritually but never wholly.

"Where I Lived and What I Lived For" sets the pattern for *Walden's* rhetorical and mythic movement. Thoreau recalls and reaffirms the challenging epigraph of the title-page and more bluntly than elsewhere affirms his own position and comments critically on that of his readers—their desire for "news," what "sleepers" they are. And as he describes his own "morning" life, Thoreau establishes his two myths, of uniting with nature and through that union being spiritually reborn.

Not only do the six sections between "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" and "The Ponds," as we saw, extend our knowledge in important directions, but by having various dialectic relations, both singly and in groups, to each other and to our own ideas, they further challenge and disturb our thinking. For example, taken as a group the first three, the activities of the private life, in their fullness and richness contrast sharply with the second three, the activities of the public life. Taken in pairs, "Reading" contrasts with "Sounds," "Solitude" with "Visitors," and "The Bean-Field" with "The Village," always significantly. Furthermore, not only does each of them invariably upset our own thoughts on its subject, but each has a special rhetorical function. "Reading," for example, shows how to give ourselves to *Walden*; "Solitude" under what conditions best to do so; and the ending of "The Village," when Thoreau cries out that "wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions," shows to what a desperate strait we have come, thereby completes our mental and spiritual derangement, and makes us eager for the reassurance of "The Ponds."

Through these six essays, moreover, Thoreau brings his myth of entry into nature ever closer to its fulfillment in "The Ponds." The first three draw us more and more into nature from the world of man; in the second three, the point of view has reversed, and we are now within nature, looking back at the world of man from a further and further remove. As our involvement in the world of nature increases, so do Thoreau's promises and prophecies of the natural cycle of rebirth and renewal. The image of the silent and secret growth of summer recurs, and climaxes in "The Bean-Field" in Thoreau's own parable of the sower and the seed. At the end of "Solitude," Thoreau invokes and hymns the climactic images of the two myths of *Walden* by calling for a "draught of un-

diluted morning air" from that Hebe of whom he says, "wherever she came it was spring."

"The Ponds" is the central, crucial, pivotal section of *Walden*. Its length suggests this; its contents confirm it. In reading "The Ponds" we feel *Walden's* five patterned movements even more intensely than elsewhere in the book. As we have seen, "The Ponds" is the keystone of the arch of *Walden's* absolute form. Also, it marks a major stage in *Walden's* narrative movement, and it reflects that movement in little, displaying within itself Thoreau's double chronology of compression into one year and extension far beyond two. It completes the first half of *Walden's* exposition and makes an important transition to the second half. It does more than this, however. By inviting us to think poetically and imaginatively, rather than logically and dialectically, it frees us from the challenge and controversy of the first half of the book and admits us into Thoreau's innermost, most secret confidence as the earliest sections never seemed to do. Finally, as we respond poetically and imaginatively to "The Ponds," we are immersed as fully in the world of nature as we are ever to be, thereby completing Thoreau's first myth, and are symbolically baptized and purified and thereby made ready to re-enact Thoreau's second myth, of seasonal change, with him. Symbolically, too, "The Ponds" tells us, in our seasonal renewal, to shun the muddy, impure shallows, to seek the clear, deep, solitary life, a life cleansed by regular change, and reflecting heaven.

Thus, after "The Ponds," not only have the context and content of Thoreau's exposition changed, but the tone of his rhetorical appeal as well. He has subtly adopted a new manner to suit the second half of his and the reader's journey together. Often he seems more generous and less demanding, for he and the reader are now one in purpose, and

we share his thoughts rather than being tested by them. At times, even—"Higher Laws" for example—he now dares admit to personal crotchets and whims that humanize his ideals without marring them. In the winter sections, his tone grows quieter and more private yet, as if, forced by Thoreau's isolation to abandon his actual presence, we have retreated within his mind and there listen to his symbolic telling and enacting of his myth of spiritual sleep or death followed by the miraculous rebirth or reawakening of spring, at which time the tone of the rhetoric passes out of reverie, and rises swiftly to affirmation and exultation.

This myth of rebirth, long promised, and made manifest in these final sections, is *Walden's* most important literary statement. To trace this myth, by responding poetically and imaginatively to the formal, narrative, expository, and especially the rhetorical movement of the second half of *Walden*, is to read *Walden* fully as a work of literature. Now that we have entered fully into nature by way of the first half of *Walden*, now that our imaginations are stimulated and symbolically consecrated by "The Ponds," we are ready to do this.

Thoreau begins his myth with the opening section of "Baker Farm," his religious communion with and consecration by nature. After thus affirming his priesthood, Thoreau offers the example of John Field the Irishman, which must be read as a parable of the need of all Thoreau's readers for *talaria* for their "wading webbed bog-trotting feet" rather than as Thoreau's serious solution to Concord's Irish problem—although, characteristically, Thoreau's "poetic" recommendations seem more realistic on second glance than does John Field's present reality. Through this parable Thoreau asserts the need for spiritual regeneration, for moral rebirth. In "Higher Laws," just as bathing in the pond cleansed more than physically, so does the gradual renunciation of a mere phys-

ical tasting of and feeding on natural life lead to a further betterment not just physical but moral, not just of the body but of the imagination, a betterment by laws "higher" in several senses. And at the end, Thoreau offers a second, reinforcing parable, this time of John Farmer, who heard the flute of Pan-Thoreau leading him "to let his mind descend into his body and redeem it."

With "Brute Neighbors" come, as the fulfillment of Thoreau's refusal to prey any longer on natural life, what are for most readers the richest and most intimate moments of his life in nature, each of them a further source of moral education and a rite of communion. By such episodes, and especially by the mysterious and intensely empathetic final encounter with the loon and the god of the loon, the mind is fed with matter for it in turn to feed on during the long winter quiescence before rebirth in spring. Now, too, it is the fall days of October in *Walden's* narrative movement, and we feel the center of interest turn in toward the silence and night and death of winter.

The winter sections, from "House-Warming" through "The Pond in Winter," prepare directly and symbolically for Thoreau's "Spring" and for the reader's. To trace their symbolism in detail would make an explication as long as *Walden* itself, and for the aware reader *Walden* is its own explication. But the main patterns can be noted. The fires of "House-Warming" burn "both within my house and within my breast" to keep the cabined spirit alive through the symbolic death of winter, a death whose meaning is only intensified by our knowing how easily "a little colder Friday or greater snow" could turn symbol to reality. This winter death and the promise of spring parallel the real deaths (and failures) of *Walden's* "Former Inhabitants" and the spring lilacs growing out of the abandoned cellars of Breed, Col. Quoil, and the rest. Thoreau's "Winter

"Visitors" are those best suited for such a time of isolation and renewal, farmer, poet, philosopher, and, above all, "the Visitor who never comes." The quiet discussion of "Winter Animals" not only reminds us of the life also continuing around Thoreau but at the same time marks the low point of the mythic cycle, of the curve of lessening and then resurging moral and spiritual intensity. "The Pond in Winter," the last and most important of the winter sections, reasserts and reaffirms, within the context of winter's stasis and with all the difference this implies, the poetic and imaginative demands of *Walden's* pivotal "The Ponds"; it shows once again "that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol"; and it ends with parallel visions of the coming of spring to Walden and of Thoreau's symbolic meeting with "the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra," a meeting which expands into a vision of universal purification and consecration.

With "Spring," in style, image, allusion, and theme the most insistently symbolic of all *Walden's* sections, the myth is fulfilled, the rite is enacted. "Walden was dead and is alive again," and so likewise is the soul of man on that symbolic "spring morning" that fuses *Walden's* two dominant images into a moment of forgiveness and renewal.

*Walden's* "Conclusion" is, as we have seen, the further abutment of the arch of formal structure. Apart from this, it is, as suits its purpose, no real conclusion at all but rather, to re-phrase another literary moralist, a conclusion in which everything is begun, in short, the near abutment of an even higher and firmer arch. For although Thoreau does end his narrative, he makes us even more aware that he has gone on to live "several

more lives." His exposition suddenly shows us "new continents and worlds" and makes clear that *Walden* has always been not a program but a parable, not a way of life but only one man's way of leading life rightly. By his rhetoric he once more challenges us, this time hopefully and affirmatively, to put foundations under our castles in the air, and leaves us on a rising note. Finally, by such images as the sea journey and such stories as that of the artist of Kouroo, Thoreau suggests new myths through which we may inform our lives, and by others, such as the fable of the "strong and beautiful bug" or the image of the sun that is but a "morning star," he re-illuminates *Walden's* main literary statement.

To sum up, *Walden* has organic structure—a patterned movement that is formal, narrative, expository, rhetorical, and above all, mythic. The careful and responding reader of *Walden* feels these patterns of movement, at places some more intensely than others, at crucial places all united as one, working together to further Thoreau's intent to revive and re-form his reader's mind. *Walden's* straight narrative chronology carries the reader naturally from one stage of exposition to the next: moving in time, he grows in knowledge. And as *Walden*, rhetorically heightened and imaginatively ordered and intensified, becomes literature, narrative in turn becomes ritual, and knowledge revelation; and the sum of these becomes myth, the ultimate literary experience, still contained within the arch of absolute form. Thus, when the reader has finished *Walden*, for the first time or the fiftieth, he has moved with Thoreau through this fivefold organic structure. He has expected and had his expectations fulfilled. He has traveled much in *Walden*.

# The Care and Feeding of English Departments

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There are a number of American institutions which are always placed among the chronically ailing. Each year we look for the collapse of the Broadway theater and the Washington Senators; every four years we wonder if the spurious claims of Estes Kefauver will again be honored in a presidential campaign. Now another sanctified American institution seems to have been assigned the permanent role of fabulous invalid. Mourners have appeared who regrettably pronounce last rites over the study of English literature in the United States. Departments of English are being cited as on their last legs.

Lionel Trilling, himself a professor of English at Columbia and an ornament of Anglo-American literary scholarship, recently published a diagnosis of the prevailing situation of English literature in American colleges so melancholy that it can only be termed an elegy. Louis B. Wright, Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library and a formidable American man of letters, told a Commencement audience last June that current principles of literary criticism are so pernicious that they prelude the certain extinction of Departments of English.<sup>1</sup> Here and there, to be sure, a university administrator must have sniffed expectantly.

<sup>1</sup>Lionel Trilling, "English Literature and American Education," *Sewanee Review*, LXVI (Summer 1958), 364-381. Dr. Wright's remarks were quoted in news stories about the Commencement exercises.

English Departments, with their enormous staffs, massive budgets, and interminable problems of promotion, have wearied many a campus bureaucrat.

One wonders, however, how much substance there is in the professorial wind of Drs. Trilling and Wright. Are Departments of English to follow the Departments of Greek and Latin into an academic graveyard? Will Departments of English, those traditional sanctuaries of the co-ed in search of a husband and her suitor in search of a gut course, disappear abruptly, leaving behind no trace but an occasional Dean of Men or Vice President in-charge-of Public Relations?

One doubts it. English Departments may rot, one concludes, but they will not expire. They have built-in advantages which Departments of Greek and Latin never enjoyed in this country. Their hierachal strength is awesome; they have been for innumerable generations an ever-replenished reservoir for new deans and presidents, drawn in large part from assistant professors of English who did not publish but who would not perish. Freshman and often sophomore courses in English are a fixed requirement for almost all collegiate degrees. American parents regard the offerings of English Departments as necessities for Junior's cultural housebreaking. Why then, if they enjoy such protection and appeal, should there be this current preparation of obsequies?

One reason is certainly the new lustre of the natural sciences. The career opportunities and rewards, to say nothing of the patriotic appeal to defense-minded young men and women, are substantial and immediate. Scholarships and fellowships in the sciences are at this moment infinitely more plentiful than in the humanities; a bright kid with a gift for physics is as abundantly and shamelessly recruited as a promising fullback.

Another reason is probably the vocational rigidity of a degree in English. "What can I do with it except teach English?" the undergraduate inquires belligerently. The candid English instructor has only the twin alternatives of a coarse suggestion or a bleak affirmative. Save in a few of our most ancient universities and most august liberal arts colleges, the teaching of undergraduate English courses has not been a desirable teaching assignment nor one likely to win the young instructor raises and tenure. The prestige continues to belong, insanely, to the graduate courses, remarkable for their inept and despotic teaching practices; the conscientious undergraduate teacher of English has regularly been passed over for promotion or dealt off in the winter trading to a lesser institution.

Undergraduates quite naturally seek the provocative teacher, whom of recent years they have found as regularly in the social sciences as in English. English Departments are perennially a vocational paradox. The chemist is a trained technician. He is what he teaches; he is a chemist. The sociologist is fully capable of professional work in the field. Only the English teacher, with rare exceptions, has not practiced regularly what he teaches. He has traditionally been a great reader of books, but not a writer of them. He has more often than not been a drillmaster rather than a man of letters. He has often seemed to the undergraduate the stereotype of the man who teaches because he cannot do. This too has

chilled the prospective student of English literature in a pragmatic society.

The thwarted creativity of English professors is psychically reflected, one concludes, in the bitter relationships within most English Departments; an academic observer is hard put to locate any other Department which contains more small wounds and more aggrieved members who must never under any circumstances be invited to parties attended by certain other departmental colleagues. The ambitious apprentice to literary scholarship and criticism has also to be mindful that the doctoral degree in English has been evaded without apparent loss by American men of letters and scholars as distinguished and productive as George Lyman Kittredge, Van Wyck Brooks, Edmund Wilson, R. P. Blackmur, Bernard DeVoto, Robert Penn Warren, Malcolm Cowley, and Howard Mumford Jones.

An even more pressing reason for the decline of British literary study in the United States, I think, is certainly the new strength of American literature as an academic course of study. The national literature is no longer the Cinderella of the English Departments, suitable for the large, popular undergraduate course but banished when the academic booty of promotions and endowed chairs is divided up. During the past fifteen or twenty years, for example, the chairmanships of an extraordinary number of English Departments—California, Brown, Vanderbilt, NYU, Tulane, Nebraska, Yale, Bowdoin, UCLA, Virginia, Dartmouth, Wesleyan, Iowa State, Swarthmore, North Carolina, Wellesley, Duke, Trinity, Baylor, Chicago—have fallen into the hands of professors of American literature at various times and for various periods. This would have been unthinkable as recently as a quarter of a century ago; there were relatively few professors of American literature in 1935, and those few were rarely regarded as eligible for departmental leadership.

The number of graduate students whose chosen field of concentration is American literature has now become an embarrassment to many Departments of English. The graduate faculties—heavily in-bred with philologists and experts on *Beowulf* or *Piers Plowman*, or the *Faerie Queen*, or the *Dunciad*—are often ill-equipped to deal with students eager for Hawthorne and Melville and Hart Crane and Faulkner. New appointments in American literature have become necessary in order to provide trained supervisors for Ph.D. dissertations; the numerical relationship of professors of American literature to professors of English literature, within a single English Department, is becoming bizarre in its imminent equality.

The mass defection of students away from the former jewels of literary study in this country—Spenser, Milton, the Restoration drama, the eighteenth century—and into American literature courses has been accompanied by the parallel magnetism of new programs in areas known variously as American Civilization and American Studies. Students who were formerly restricted to English Departments because of an absence of literary alternatives have had available to them since World War II a whole new field of academic instruction, staffed by well-trained young men under the leadership of a handful of distinguished older scholars of emancipated tastes and durable values. Ill-tempered professors of British literature, pressed by their colleagues in American literature to revise the syllabus in realistic response to the new pressures, have sometimes challenged their associates to splinter off into these American Studies programs; where the splintering has occurred, in response to the bitter invitation, it has invariably taken with it a good part of both the student membership and the faculty vitality. Scholars of American literature, long on the defensive about our national literature and persistently barred from

publication in the literary learned journals, are enjoying a discreet revenge.

Their revenge is short-sighted, it seems to me, if it is accompanied by a willingness to permit English Departments to wither into appendages of American literature or into mere service programs for freshman courses in verbal communication or the training of high school English teachers. Tiresome and provincial as the English Departments of this country have frequently been during the past half century, servile in their Anglophilic and sterile and repetitive in much of their own scholarship, the fact nevertheless remains, to put it in a way least calculated to please the professors of English, that a firm apparatus of instruction in English literature is essential for the training of teachers and scholars of American literature.

It would be a professional catastrophe if graduate students in American literature were allowed to complete their training without a coherent base of instruction in British literature. Only in the twentieth century, and not always then, have American writers completed their novels and poems with a serene confidence in the existence of a solid tradition and continuity of American letters. Throughout the nineteenth century—still, and rightly, the major area of American literary scholarship—American writers were mindful of their English models as their vocational betters. Not for nothing was Bryant called the American Wordsworth and Cooper the American Scott.

Teachers and scholars of American literature must therefore have available to them the rigorous sequence of British literary history and achievement and practice. If the proportion must be realistically adjusted to allow additional courses in our lengthening national literature, a generation of teachers and scholars should nevertheless not be permitted to develop who are ignorant of or super-

ficially acquainted with our literature's major origins.

The appeal of American Civilization programs is a luminous and meaningful one, offering as they do the intellectual excitement of cross-departmental techniques and ideas. As a program of general education the American Civilization curriculum has few equals at the undergraduate level. For the energetic scholar it offers a challenging and fruitful source for new projects. Here again, however, the prospective teacher of literature, unless literature is to be completely taught from now on as a cultural artifact rather than artistic achievement, is apt to become, without training in the English Departments, an anthropologist rather than a literary interpreter.

The obligation of English Departments to preserve their traditional leadership in the humanities, and to maintain a decent equilibrium with the sciences, is an immense one. It is not fulfilled by the sullen belittlement of the tangible accomplishment and appeal of American literature, nor by a retreat to the well-fortified strongholds of linguistics and minor British writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Professors and students of American literature have an equal responsibility in this realignment of English Department aspiration. A good deal of the presentation and exploration of American literature now fluctuates crazily between the unrealistic extremes of a socio-political approach on the one hand, following the lead of Parrington, and on the other hand a solemn exegesis of a handful of sacred texts—Hawthorne, Melville, James, Faulkner—which is equally unbalanced in its distortion of the actualities of literary composition and sound pedagogy. Nor is this the moment for arrogance or ignorant chauvinism among scholars of American literature. There is already a new kind of provincialism in some of the scholarly and critical aggrandizement of twentieth-century American literary achievement.

What is most clear, in fact, is that a number of reforms are necessary in the management and objectives of most English Departments.

The material hardships and professional degradation of the average young instructor or assistant professor in most English Departments, for example, are notorious. The broad base of these junior ranks, ill-paid and condemned to the elementary courses, is not made more habitable by an upper hierarchy which too often has hoarded its privileges and ignored the responsibilities of guild loyalties. Clearly the dirty work will always be done by the juniors; clearly there will always be prerogatives of seniority. This does not prevent the modest redistribution of advanced undergraduate courses, and graduate courses as well, among energetic younger men, nor does it require that senior professors should withhold responsibility from experienced colleagues in their thirties who are unaccountably regarded as feckless youngsters. These are the horrors of any hierachal system—the military is a sound parallel—and any Department in all American universities can provide its illustrations of such wasteful inequities. The inanities of tenure, with its invitation to mediocrity and torpor, are shared by all academic disciplines. English Departments, however, by reason of their size and the vast number of their elementary courses, to say nothing of the difficulties of producing and evaluating literary scholarship, are particularly conspicuous in all these abuses.

The shocking practice of employing first- and second-year graduate students as part-time instructors in the freshman classes, begun in the large state universities and now widely imitated by many otherwise reputable private universities, has no worst offender than the English Department. Such a system has no beneficiaries; each partner to the system is instead a certain loser. The graduate student is deprived of the opportunity

to complete his professional training at a reasonable pace and with proper time for his internship. The freshman is exposed to perfunctory teaching by conscientious but over-extended instructors. The Department itself suffers because of the deterioration of graduate student performance and freshman morale. The university budget-makers, to be sure, thrive briefly. They are enabled by what is in effect the use of sweated, untrained personnel to pay wages far below those of the competitive market. Even this, however, is plainly a boomerang advantage in the light of the other diminishment of standards.

A plausible argument can even be made that at the present time there is no adequate training for graduate students in most English Departments as regards the fundamentals of the profession which they propose to serve as teachers and interpreters. It is a rare English Department which offers any kind of instruction in the practice of literature as a profession either in England in the past or in the United States now. A great deal of new information is now at hand—supplied in large part by other disciplines—about the creative process of literary artists, but you will not hear much mention of it in the English seminars, where textual emendation is still a priestly role. Nor do English Departments concern themselves with the vocational problems of writing fiction for a particular market, nor the merchandising of that same fiction, nor the role of the publishing houses and editors and literary

agents, nor the nature of popular taste in a democracy, nor the reading habits of the various audiences of the various writers whose work is being studied.

Students of American literature in particular, if they are to remain within the English Departments where a portion of them properly belong, must be reprieved from the meaningless and antique requirements in the medieval history of the Anglo-Saxon language. Adequate courses in colonial American literature, still neglected in most of our major universities, must be added to the curriculum. Few English Departments concern themselves with giving instruction to graduate students in how to present material or how to handle classroom procedure. Instead the English Departments—and most Departments in the humanities—still cling piously to the ludicrous and lazy notion that good teachers are born, not made.

Dissertations on living or recently dead authors must be allowed without reservation to qualified doctoral candidates. The dreary gibes about the two major living American poets—Eliot and Auden—being Englishmen have been overworked and in fact can no longer be demonstrated. The cracks about American literature—*Is there an American literature?*—delivered in those bloody awful accents learned during an Oxford summer or a sabbatical in the British Museum, are whistles in the dark. It's time for English Departments to borrow their strategy from the politicians. If you can't lick them, join them.

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# The Possibilities of Christian Tragedy

ELIAS SCHWARTZ

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Are Christianity and tragedy really incompatible with each other? Critics as different in outlook as A. C. Bradley and I. A. Richards have said so, and no one, to my knowledge, has challenged so authoritatively sanctioned an opinion. Yet the question is still alive, for there are recurrent discussions of it in print.<sup>1</sup> Professor Crane has glanced at the matter—only to rule it out of bounds. It involves, he says (*The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*, 1953, p. 37), “a pseudo-issue, one which is made to look like an issue of fact but which really has no identifiable reference outside the game of dialectical counters in which it has arisen.” Those who feel that the problem is real will not be satisfied with such a solution. Granted that the approach to the problem has hitherto

been “unreal,” the problem itself is still there.

Crane himself (pp. 23-25) distinguishes two basic modes of critical procedure and thus provides a means of formulating our problem in terms which make it accessible to real solution. The “abstract” mode begins typically with some hypothesis about literature or nature or men, and then discusses particular works in terms of this hypothesis. The “matter-of-fact” method, on the other hand, begins with the “fact” of some actual literary form and attempts to reason back to the necessary causes of such a work and to the causes of its excellence or imperfection. Of the latter method Aristotle is, of course, the founder and chief exemplar.

Now attempts to deal with our problem have usually proceeded by way of the “abstract” method, and Crane is right, I think, in suggesting that, so conceived, the problem admits only of an irrelevant solution. That is, if one

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, E. I. Watkin, *Poets and Mystics* (1953), pp. 42-47; and Laurence Michel, “The Possibility of a Christian Tragedy,” *Thought*, XXXI (Autumn 1956), 403-428. A recent book of essays on *The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith* (ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., 1957) is not, as it promises to be, concerned with our subject. Except for the essay on Shakespearean Tragedy by Roy Battenhouse, none of the essays considers tragedy as a dramatic genre. They are concerned rather with what the authors take to be a general view of life implicit in tragic drama and many other forms, which goes by the name of “the tragic vision.” The point of the Battenhouse essay seems to be that there are many Biblical analogues in Shakespeare’s plays, many as yet undiscovered.

In an even more recent book (*The Vision of Tragedy*, 1959), Richard B. Sewall seems to stand on both sides of the question. At one point (pp. 156-157) he agrees with Michel that “the incompatibility of tragedy and Christianity is inescapable,” and goes on to say that

he uses the term “Christian tragedy” only as a “useful way of referring to tragedy written in the Christian era which bears the mark of Christian thought and feeling, however short it falls (and to be tragedy, it always does) of the doctrines of the Church.” Elsewhere (p. 53), however, Sewall seems to approach my own position: “Instead of negating tragedy, or taking man in one leap of faith ‘beyond tragedy,’ Christianity in actual practice, historically, has provided a matrix out of which has come, since the beginnings of the Renaissance, a prodigious amount of tragic expression, not only in literature but in painting, sculpture, and music.” From this last phrase it is apparent that Sewall does not think of tragedy as a determinate dramatic genre. The issue therefore can never, I think, be precisely joined.

conceives the problem as involving a relation between two abstract essences ("Tragedy" and "Christianity"), then the problem is merely logical, its solution depending merely on the working out of the logical relations between the two concepts. If, however, we formulate the problem in "factual" terms, the problem and its solution become quite different. Thus: Will a spectator who believes what Christians have traditionally believed respond to actual tragedies in the same way as a non-Christian spectator, or not?

Or, appropriating Aristotle's definition, we may define a Christian tragedy as a dramatic imitation of a serious and complete action, explicitly ordered with respect to Christian moral-religious principle. (We cannot yet include in our definition Aristotle's final cause—arousal and purgation of pity and fear—because this is precisely what remains to be decided.) Our problem then is: Can a Christian tragedy arouse and purge pity and fear?

To these questions E. I. Watkin (*Poets and Mystics*, pp. 42-43) has answered an unqualified "no." Tragedy, he says, involves the tragic conflict, and the tragic conflict in turn involves the presuppositions of a non-religious interpretation of life. For the tragic conflict is a conflict between values, and a waste of values, as seen from the natural, purely human and subreligious standpoint . . . It depends on acceptance of the values presented in human experience, whether positive or negative, as they are valued by the natural man, from his purely human and earthly standpoint, and therefore, implies ignorance of their absolute, their real value. Did we see clearly the real value, the value for eternity of the objects of human desire or aversion, or human love or human hate, we could no longer share the joy and sorrow, and therefore could not enter into the tragic conflict of those who accept them at their apparent value.

I think that Watkin begs the question at issue here in two ways: (1) by assuming that a Christian habitually sees and

feels things under the aspect of eternity, and (2) by assuming that the capacity so to see and feel things precludes the capacity to respond to them at their natural value. Both assumptions involve a confusion of logical relations with psychological "facts."

Does the Christian habitually respond to things in terms of final ends? We are speaking, as we must in questions of this sort, of the "mass" of men, those who, according to Aristotle, are neither very good nor very bad. For the saint, perhaps, purely human values dissolve in the light of the good that transcends them. But such detachment is hardly possible for the normative Christian, particularly when he is engaged in a serious drama. Claudio's response to death is, I think, typical and normative. The Duke and Isabella have told him how to die. He knows how. But his fear remains: "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where; To lie in cold obstruction and to rot . . ."

Watkin's second assumption also involves a view of human psychology at variance with common experience. It is, I think, entirely possible for one to respond to things at their natural value while seeing clearly their value for eternity. "Wisdom"—knowing the causes and ends of things—clarifies, rather than blurs, one's perception of the purely natural. The little wisdom that comes to us merely through the accretion of age does not render us incapable of understanding the passions of the young. Such wisdom helps us to understand passion better, indeed, than those possessed by it. Nor does such wisdom inhibit our sympathy for the sufferer. It is the old who know best what the young feel and who offer them the sincerest compassion. The analogy is, I think, a fair one, for religious wisdom is, after all, a kind of wisdom, and we are speaking of its possession by human beings.

To consider the effect of a particular tragedy on a Christian spectator, we

might begin with *Oedipus Tyrannos*, a non-Christian tragedy whose power will hardly be questioned. Our Christian spectator, according to Watkin, will not be moved to pity and fear by *Oedipus* because he cannot see life on the same terms as its protagonist. But the point to be insisted upon—the one Watkin misses—is that Oedipus sees life in terms of *universally experienced realities*. Oedipus (and any normal spectator) suffers and perceives the fallibility of even the finest human intelligence before the inscrutable complexity of life. Oedipus comes to know Man's awful ignorance of consequences in his best-intended acts. This is the beast that lies in ambush for the brilliant and confident Oedipus—and this is the beast that lurks in all our jungles. It is surely no disparagement of Christianity to say that Christians may share Oedipus's view of the evils that befall him, to assume, in short, that they possess human feelings. Christianity may endow human nature with potentialities it did not before possess; but it cannot transform human nature, and no theologian, so far as I know, has ever claimed that it can.

Turning now to Christian tragedy proper, we find Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* ready to hand. And, since the Christian ought to see life on the same terms as Faustus, we might expect Watkin to admit the play's tragic power. No, says Watkin (p. 47), even *Dr. Faustus* cannot be tragic, because "if we once see that the highest value is . . . the most real Reality, we see that a man can miss it only by his own freely willed fault, and miss it in the precise measure of his free rejection." This seems to mean, in our own terms, that the Christian cannot identify himself with Dr. Faustus and will therefore not feel fear for him. But is not Watkin's supposititious Christian grievously prone to Pride? One might suppose that the Christian would rather think that there but for the grace of God goes he.

The problem that chiefly faces us in *Dr. Faustus* is the arousal of pity rather than fear. For if pity is aroused by undeserved misfortune, and if, for the Christian, Faustus eminently deserves damnation, then the arousal of pity really appears to be impossible. The point I would make here is this: whatever a Christian may believe about Faustus's damnation, he will not feel that it is wholly deserved. This is so because, to the "natural" mind, infinite punishment always seems in excess of apparently finite acts; or, more simply, because of the abiding mysteriousness of human sin and divine retribution. That Christians can pity the damned is attested by our response to the famous Paolo and Francesca episode of the *Inferno*. The tragic power of the episode is, in part, a consequence of our intense awareness of the lovers' infinite loss. Dante, in his own "person," so instructs us when, after hearing the lovers' story, he faints "as though I were dying; and fell, as a dead body falls."

Despite the magnificence of certain scenes, *Dr. Faustus* does not achieve the power of our greatest tragedies. But this is not a result of Faustus's salvation being brought explicitly into question; it is rather a consequence of his scanty characterization. He impresses us at times as an allegorical figure and cannot, as such, elicit our full sympathy. As a "case" *Dr. Faustus* is, therefore, inconclusive, for, though it suggests the possibility of Christian tragedy, the possibility is not realized.

It is, I think, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that the case for Christian tragedy is most convincingly made. The play meets our definition of the type squarely: its action turns on Christian moral-religious principle in a way that the action of *Othello* or *Macbeth* does not. In the latter plays we find an assumption of a general Christian outlook, but in their action Christian principle is not explicitly or functionally formative. Per-

haps I can make this distinction clearer by presenting a summary of the central action of *Hamlet*.<sup>2</sup>

An acutely intelligent and scrupulous Christian, Hamlet is enjoined by his father's ghost to do what is almost beyond the capability of flesh and blood: to avenge his father's murder and taint not his own soul. Revenge not only goes against the grain of Hamlet's sensibility; it is especially fearful to him because he knows it may involve his damnation. For revenge is mortally sinful. Even when public justice is unavailable, revenge is justifiable only if the avenger is explicitly commissioned to act as God's minister and only if he performs his commission without a vestige of personal passion. In view of his feelings toward Claudius, Hamlet's task is well-nigh impossible. His spiritual struggles (his "hesitations" if you prefer) thus stem from the almost insuperable difficulty of avenging his father's murder and saving his soul.

The initial movement of the play comprises Hamlet's attempt to discover whether the ghost is a "spirit of health or goblin damned." If the ghost is an infernal apparition, Hamlet will be risking damnation by acting on its word. Hence the mousetrap to make sure. But even when he is sure of the ghost, he still faces the possibility of damnation if he acts in a spirit of personal vengeance. And to this he comes perilously close. When, after the mousetrap, Hamlet finds Claudius at his prayers, he fails to kill him—for the wrong reason. He will wait, he says, until he can be sure of sending Claudius's soul straight to Hell—an intention that appalled Samuel Johnson. But if he does kill Claudius with such intention, he will almost certainly damn himself. There is thus a kind of

double irony in his *not* killing Claudius at this time, for, as we learn at the end of the scene, the latter's prayers were ineffectual.

The killing of Polonius in the next scene, as Bowers points out, is the turning point of the play. In killing Polonius, rashly and wrongly, Hamlet becomes both minister and scourge—as he himself realizes. The murder, he knows, will set him packing; and he knows too that he "will answer well the death I gave him." He knows he is a doomed man.

So the mood of Hamlet and the tone of the play now move in the direction of Christian resignation. Dimly at first but with increasing clarity, Hamlet perceives that the way to his goal lies, not in action, but in putting himself into the keeping of God's Providence. "Let it work," he remarks of the plot laid for his life; he will delve below these mines. But when he returns to Elsinore he is a changed man. His indiscretion has served him well, for he has learned of the "divinity that shapes our ends," and that "The readiness is all." This is the mood so wonderfully realized in the graveyard scene, which points up not only the vanity of mortal glory but the futility of Hamlet's early attempts at action. Possessed of such a vision, having achieved the detachment which makes his task possible, Hamlet carries out his commission and, perhaps, saves his immortal soul too.

My summary leaves out of account a good deal in the play, but the central action seems to me accurately, if barely, outlined by it. If it is thus structured, the play meets our definition of Christian tragedy. And there can be little question about the play's tragic power—particularly for a Christian spectator. For not only death threatens Hamlet; damnation threatens him too. The tragic emotions are thus aroused in regard to both natural and supernatural evils. The final movement of the play, moreover, enhances that acquiescence which Brad-

<sup>2</sup>My interpretation of *Hamlet* is indebted to I. J. Semper's pioneer study, *Hamlet Without Tears* (1946), and to Fredson Bowers's "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," *PMLA*, LXX (Sept. 1955), 740-749.

ley discerned as proper to the close of a tragedy. Hamlet's resignation facilitates detachment in the spectator (especially in a Christian one) and thus enables him to view the play as a meaningful whole, to see the underlying order which "justifies" the painful events he has witnessed.

My thesis gains, finally, a degree of support from certain theories about the origin of tragic drama. I refer to the tracing of Greek drama back to ancient religious rituals, in which was enacted the destruction and rebirth of the Year Spirit. The tragic hero, as we know him in the tragedies that have come down to us, embodies strangely contradictory qualities. Oedipus, for example, is both innocent and terribly guilty. By suffering for unwilling and unintended crimes, he cleanses—purges—society, and so makes possible material and moral rebirth. Such a hero's curious make-up is, according to Gilbert Murray (*The Classical Tradition in Poetry*, 1930, pp. 64-65),

quite in accord with the strange but well-known confusion which exists in the Bacchic ritual and the sacramental feast. Is it the god himself who is torn and devoured, or is it the god's enemy? To avoid the horror of murdering your god, you can say that the figure you tear is the enemy Pentheus and not the god Dionysus; but you know in your heart that it is only the life of Dionysus himself that will have any true magical effect, and you show your knowledge of this by arranging that the image which you call Pentheus shall be shaped and dressed in every detail so as to be like Dionysus . . . .

Put briefly, it seems that historically the tragic hero is derived both from the Life Spirit . . . who comes to save the community with the fruits of the New Year, and from the polluted Old Year, the *Pharmakos* or Scapegoat, who is cast out to die or to wander in the wilderness, bearing with him the sins of the community.

Now if this theory be valid, and if these primitive meanings inform the tragic hero (I believe they do), then the Christian martyr ought to be an excellent tragic hero. For the martyr is, from one point of view, a scapegoat figure: by his innocent and supererogatory suffering, he "purges" the Mystical Body. The viability of the martyr as tragic hero and the potency of martyrdom as tragic plot is, I think, "proved" for us beyond question in Carl Dreyer's film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1927). The complex emotion which it elicits is strikingly similar to that which Murray describes as proper to Greek tragedy. On the one hand, he says (p. 65), we feel love for the tragic hero because he is a saviour, "a brave man fighting and suffering to redeem those who without him would be lost; we feel horror toward him because of his sins and pollutions, and their awful expiation. And both feelings must have been intensified in ancient tragedy by the subconscious memory that the sins he expiates are really ours." This is precisely the sort of double consciousness and ambivalent response that Dreyer, with great technical skill, appeals to. His camera cuts continually from "super-natural" to "natural" scenes and back again (as in the close-ups of the trial sequence), playing these juxtaposed "perspectives" against each other so that we see the action simultaneously as one of acute human suffering and of spiritual progress toward apotheosis. Especially at the climax, when Joan is at the stake, the camera turns from Joan and focuses with extraordinary power and "rightness" on those anonymous faces in the crowd with whom we become identified, and those faces, in momentary and extreme close-up, run the gamut of strictly human response: terror, awe, hysteria, grief. Since the film demands both a religious and human response, it is, I think, powerfully tragic for both Christian and non-Christian.

But it is also more profoundly tragic for the Christian. Which makes one suspect not only that Christian tragedy is pos-

sible but that its possibilities are greater than those known or envisaged by Aristotle.

## To Grade or Retrograde?

ALEX PAGE

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Whatever else is happening upon the educational horizon, it is pretty clear that classes are growing larger and that each instructor is having to face an ever greater number of students. While students seem to feel more isolated, more IB-eMmed, few instructors can tell with conviction whether a certain student is or isn't on his rolls. He may "know" the student only by a grade he finally, fingers crossed, "administers." And the student often feels, not without justice, that a grade is precisely what he is supposed to be out to get.

At a time like this it may be necessary to look again at the dual role the teacher has to play vis-à-vis his students. My experience with freshman composition and world literature courses has made me suspect that each of the two traditional roles tends to subvert the other. Briefly, I see one as that of the teacher *qua* teacher, i.e., guide, "leader-outer," presenter, expounder—as the awakener, as the one who is "with" the student. The other is that of judge and evaluator, the affixer of a grade that will remain with the student for life. In this role he is, for better or worse (I think worse), somehow "against" the student. A mild touch of academic schizophrenia?

I am aware that I am alluding to two components of the personality that at a high level of integration constitute the wise parent. But the teacher is not a par-

ent, even though there is, on the whole, little dispute that the smaller the class the better the instruction and the greater the likelihood of his being "all things to all students." But I speak of large classes and necessarily formal contacts wherein he is shared by ever more "siblings." It is the teacher's second role, that of judge and grader, constrained to pass sentence on mighty slim evidence—this role demands re-examination. While I find myself in sympathy with those whose annoyance with the grading system leads them to advocate the scrapping of all grades, I am also unable to see how a fairly consistent, interchangeable system of evaluating a student's work can be abandoned in a society like ours that has committed itself to mass education. My object will be to suggest a possible means of lessening the deleterious consequences of the teacher's double role.

Why deleterious? The grade, as we know, and as the students are only too well aware, becomes part of the record, is averaged in, and will follow him around in the important early years after leaving college like that infamous *Doppelgänger*—the grade is indeed a mark. If the student is moderately determined to make good, moderately resentful at being hardly seen in large classes, and fairly astute at figuring the angles, he will in one way or another

try to enforce the terms of the implied contract established between teacher and student. Being part of a large mass he doesn't have much choice. His attitude is something like this: "Tell me what to do, teacher, tell me what you want; I will do it to the letter (*[sotto voce]* as best I can, making up with work, work, work what is beyond my really digging in), and then expect my A or the next best to it." It is, as William G. Perry, Jr. has pointed out in a most enlightening essay, looking upon the teacher as They, "to get them to commit themselves, to find out what they think and hand it back to them on examinations" (B. B. Cronkhite, ed., *A Handbook for College Teachers*, 1950, p. 34).

The teacher, reluctant to be party to such a deal that has the overtones of academic blackmail, will leave a substantial margin of uncertainty of "what is wanted." He will point out that what he wants is that the student learn to think for himself, to face maturely and with ever greater independence texts and ideas of others and the means of organizing his own. The student's reaction to *that* one is to take it as another academic cliché and to persist in looking for disguised clues of "what is wanted." (Of course, there is more to it than that; again I refer to Perry's admirable delineation of the student's conflicts in learning, especially his ambivalences and resistances in regard to being treated as an adult.) The student will try to "figure" the instructor, will become canny in deciphering gesture, voice, and tone, to watch for previews of examination questions and how the teacher "wants" them treated. He will continue to play the game, that is, according to the reality where he sees it—the grade, on the one hand, the teacher's personality, on the other. The destructive element works its way by turning the class into this sort of cat-and-mouse dalliance—I'd have a hard time saying who is the cat and who the mouse—and the real

objects of learning and teaching are diverted. The student cannot permit himself the luxury of confronting the material of the course as an experience in itself, as a concern of fruitful, intellectual activity. The tenseness over "making the grade" effectively kills that.

A foretaste of this state of nerves is provided, I believe, at the outset of a course when the areas and limits of its substance, the lines of approach, the basis for grades and other general matters are laid before the students. One of them will invariably ask: "Who reads our exams?" General relief follows when they are told it is the instructor himself. Why this relief? Is it that a student is more assured of a square deal by someone who presumably knows him? Is the familiar, however tough, preferable to the strange, to the untried, however just? I see it as a fear of being judged *in absentia*, as it were, purely on intellectual and formal grounds, with all the identity there is, making itself felt solely on the examination paper. There is no telling what "he" wants any longer, and to try to figure an anonymous body of examiners off there is beyond even the most astute personality ploys. What seemingly black-hearted machinations I describe, I must emphasize again, must be seen, to borrow a phrase, as a reaction-formation against large classes and students no longer being taken as individual beings.

There is another way in which the teacher's dual role doubles back upon itself and now throws doubts upon his probity as a judge. I mean this: ultimately the teacher in "evaluating" and grading a set of papers or examinations, evaluates and grades himself. I believe it has become widespread practice to reserve the grade of F for students who fail to attend, fail to submit large chunks of work, are illegible or unintelligible—in short, those on whom you have the goods. Students who grasp nothing beyond a few memorized pseudo-facts,

who do not learn to write with any sense of control, who never dare look an idea in the eye—such students, if they but show a ripple of interest or effort, are let off with (at worst) a D. The teacher's self-esteem as a teacher would be in serious question were he to be relentlessly honest with himself and his students and base his judgment on achievement. His grade frequently says, "I am not sure—how can one be! Let time tell. Anyway, why jeopardize my career by failing half the class even if I know this would be an accurate estimate. Would it not show that I have failed with half of them?" I know of a language teacher who did fail 60% of an entire class, gave 35% D's and the rest C's. His contract was not renewed; all the students' grades were moved up one notch by administrative fiat. Some thought him demented, others as plagued by a secret vendetta against all students; all agreed he should not be in teaching. Perhaps. Perhaps there is also the uncomfortable possibility here of an honesty such as the usual teacher simply dare not afford. Now I think that the student has some sense of this conflict pervading the teacher's mind at grading time, and if nothing else will save him, he banks on *it*. After all, in a democracy, is it conceivable that a large segment of a class should do badly? Never—something must be wrong with the teaching and/or grading. Perhaps I push my argument too far when I say that the teacher's severity or leniency in grading reflect both his view of himself as teacher and his view of the democratic ideal of mass education.

If I have spoken mostly of the poorer students, it is that the problem manifests itself with them more frequently. But on the other side of the coin is the occasional student who, tempting his luck—he is very rare—comes in to ask why he received an A. He listens to the explanation but goes away marvelling at having got the teacher's number some-

how, in a mysterious, wonderful way. His road is clear: having done it once, he can do it again; he painstakingly devises means of imitating himself. The puzzle is, of course, what "did it" in the first place. His chagrin later at finding *this* formula to give him no help is even greater than that of the poor student who never knew grace from which to fall.

My suggestion for avoiding these troublesome consequences of the teacher's double role is a simple one: let someone else do the grading and judging; let someone outside the student-teacher relationship bear the onus of "administering justice." If this looks like an evasion of a teacher's traditional responsibility, let us be reminded that an adverse judgment, however just it may seem in the long run, is a slap in the face now—how much maturity it takes to be objective about our shortcomings! The teacher then would read the papers and make his comments as he always did but give no grades. The student would at first be dismayed by this absence of a familiar slot. But if he finds only commentary on a paper, he may learn that words and sentences speak louder than letters in the form of grades. Let him be made to feel that his work is not being passed through an automated judge (who is sometimes desperate enough to remind students that he has read thousands of papers and therefore can "tell at a glance"), but rather by a stand-in editor, as suggested in an informative article by Kenneth S. Rothwell in *College English* (April 1959). Now his task is that of pulling the "manuscript" into shape, of querying and questioning and praising with but one object: improving the manuscript. His comments amount less to a defense *raisonné* of the grade than to concrete, specific, material aids. He can fulfill his function to his students as a helper, without the (I think corrupting) maneuvers entailed in hiding the brass-

knuckles of grades under the velvet glove of commentary.

It would be the examiners' business at the end of each semester to read and grade the final examinations. They would constitute a committee of members of the English department, or, preferably, of other departments too.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they would be appointed on a rotating basis, and it would seem fair that their teaching loads be lightened during the term in which they served in this capacity. Let it be made clear that the teacher is not under examination; let the examiners also work in an air of anonymity. Each paper ought to be read by two readers, and, if there is substantial disagreement over its value, by a third. Perhaps before the grades are made official, the instructor ought to have a look at them, in case an other-

wise competent student panicked during the examination or an all-too-miraculous resuscitation occurred. But these are matters for a given department to work out to its own satisfaction once it is persuaded that the nature of the teacher's present double role leads to unnecessary evasions in the process of teaching.

That there is a double role I doubt can be denied. That the teacher as academic quick-change artist, not sure of his identity at any given moment, puzzles and vexes students I hope to have shown. That students either withdraw into sullenness, flaunt a tough-cookie cynicism, or play at an Easter-egg hunt for an A by decoding and exploiting the teacher's personality—that, too, must be a familiar and, if I may say so, tragic experience of all who face large classes. Perhaps my remedy is too sanguine, too simple. But we are, most of us, stuck with these large classes. To save ourselves from automated relationships, from perfunctory teaching which is no teaching, let us explore viable antitoxins.

<sup>1</sup>Some of my ideas derive from an acquaintance with the British system of granting the "School Certificate" and "Higher School Certificate." We have no equivalent to the Oxford and Cambridge Examining Board, nor would it seem desirable that we should. Yet some of the features do make good sense.

## 1960 Advisers for *College English*

The new advisers elected by Council vote last spring are: Edwin H. Cady of Indiana (American Literature since 1912), Wallace W. Douglas of Northwestern (Criticism), Richard Hosley of Missouri (Shakespeare), Judson Jerome of Antioch (Poetry), Charlton Laird of Nevada (Composition), Winifred Linsky of Purdue (British Literature since 1912), Alan D. McKillop of Rice (Eighteenth Century), Henry Popkin of Brandeis (Drama), Earl R. Wasserman of Johns Hopkins (Nineteenth Century), and Stephen E. Whicher of Cornell (American Literature before 1912).

Continuing for a second year are: Harold B. Allen of Minnesota (Linguistics), Maurice Beebe of Purdue (Fiction), Edward E. Bostetter of University of Washington (Curriculum), Vernon Hall, Jr. of Dartmouth (World Literature), Robert B. Heilman of University of Washington (Teaching of Literature), Harrison Hayford of Northwestern (Communication), Robert Hoopes of Michigan State, Oakland (Renaissance), Kester Svendsen of Oregon (Seventeenth Century), and B. J. Whiting of Harvard (Medieval).

# Round Table

## THE ANTIQUE DESIGN: AN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN LITERATURE

JUDSON JEROME

*Best known as a poet "in most of the likely places" like Poetry, Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Review, Harper's, Mademoiselle, and College English (see "Ishmael to Ahab" in this issue), Dr. Jerome is also an associate professor at Antioch College and the author of a number of articles.*

Three years ago, prompted by a change in the college calendar, the Antioch Literature Department completely redesigned its offerings. With two years' experience under the new program, we feel it works so well we ought to share it with other departments, in hope that some of these ideas might prove generally useful.

Formerly we were teaching three or four courses at a time. Now we teach one or two. Each member of our five-man department formerly carried a section of a standardized freshman composition course. Now, once or twice in three quarters, each of us teaches a humanities course for freshmen designed to harmonize with our personal interests and approach. We deal almost not at all with the "cripples" who come to college inadequately prepared in writing. Our field program is continuously varying: no one need ever teach the same course twice, although he may, of course. Best of all, at least once a year each of us has a ten-credit course (twice the usual number of credits), during which quarter he teaches nothing else.

Like most departments, we have a double function: to provide services in the general education program and to educate people in the field for graduate study or other work. I discuss separately our participation in general education and our field program.

### GENERAL EDUCATION

Our first step was a declaration of independence—at least of a certain amount of independence. We were able to secure unanimous agreement in faculty meeting to a written statement that literacy was equally the responsibility of every faculty mem-

ber. The Literature Department, we made clear, had no more interest in mechanical correctness and writing ability than any other department. Indeed, we seemed to have less interest than some. Moreover, our faculty members, as educated people, were equipped if not to teach writing at least to recognize and protest bad writing, to refuse to accept papers which did not meet their standards.

Vigilance of the entire faculty is the basic premise of our present approach to writing in general education—but the college, sometimes assisted by the Literature Department, provides checks and aids. Students are tested for literacy upon entrance. They must pass a third-year writing check, in part administered by our department. And they must write essays in their senior year, graded by teams from the whole faculty, in which writing competence is a major consideration. Our department has prepared a pamphlet, *Standards of Written Work at Antioch*, which clearly defines good writing as we understand it, emphasizing such things as originality, veracity, documentation, relevance, careful definition of topic, coherency and organization, as well as adherence to conventions of grammar, mechanics, and manuscript form. We have a half-time departmental assistant of professional capability to assist students with writing problems, advise them on self-help, and discuss the errors or weaknesses in their papers in detail. On a purely voluntary basis, students with difficulties (including a number of foreign students) make appointments with the assistant and embark on planned courses of self-improvement. Our final contribution is a strong emphasis upon composition in all

department courses, both general education humanities courses and those in the field of Literature.

Our function in regard to writing defined, we were free to abandon the conventional freshman composition course. Instead, we now offer a variety of beginning courses in humanities—with such titles as *Self and Society in the Modern Novel*, *Techniques of Fiction*, *Elements of Poetry*, *Literature and Science*. None of these is required. A student may take them to meet a humanities requirement in general education or he may avoid them entirely by substituting other courses (for example, in art, music, drama, or a foreign language). We advise students who are weak in writing *not* to take our courses, at least in their first quarter or even their first year. The courses are too hard for them. We pitch the courses high, demand good writing, and, in general, do not teach composition in class. If you have not had the experience, we may report it is something of a thrill to teach a freshman course which students have chosen to take because of their interest in the subject matter.

We have three "levels" in our general education program. The courses we have described are offered on the first level. To take courses on the second level, students must either pass courses and an examination in humanities or pass the examination with a high enough grade to waive the courses. On the second level we offer such general education courses as *Landmarks in Western Literature* (a two-part world literature course), *Introduction to Shakespeare*, and *American Literature* (also available for field credit). There is somewhat less emphasis upon composition in these courses, higher expectations in reading and understanding.

Our "service" in general education, then, is chiefly to provide experiences with literature—the subject we are prepared to teach and interested in teaching. We recognize that we have some responsibility for improving writing competence—but no more responsibility than any other department for insisting upon writing standards and bringing poor writing to the student's attention.

### THE FIELD

Our basic categories of courses, the Survey Series and the Literary Studies, are both innovations, at least on the undergraduate level.

*Survey Series.* These are ten-credit courses surveying the whole field of English and American literature. One of these courses constitutes the entire teaching load for a faculty member during the quarter it is given, and about two-thirds of the student's course load—enabling him to spend at least twenty hours a week in preparation. The courses are not required, and may be taken in any order. The titles are: *Beowulf to Chaucer*, *Renaissance*, *Classic and Romantic*, *Victorian and Modern*, *American Literature*.

*Literary Studies.* These are five-credit courses of variable content. In the catalogue they are listed only as: *Literary Studies: Medieval Literature*; *Literary Studies: Renaissance Literature*, etc., with separate categories for *Neoclassic*, *Romantic*, *Victorian*, *Modern*, *American*, and *World Literature*. We announce at registration time what the specific content will be—and this may be whatever the teacher (in consultation with the department) feels would be valuable. Some examples of specific content are *Restoration drama*, the early English novel, *Milton*, contemporary poetry, etc. We have only begun to see the possibilities of this flexible course plan.

Besides the Survey Series, we offer two other ten-credit courses: *Shakespeare* and *Writing*. *Shakespeare* (not to be confused with *Introduction to Shakespeare*, a five-credit general education course) is required of field majors—the only course specifically required except *Literary Criticism*, for seniors, and the senior Seminar in Literature. *Writing*, offered usually in the Summer Session, is a workshop for especially qualified students interested in professional writing. It is non-terminal, which means that the grade is not given until a year later; during that year students continue to work with the instructor and have the advantage of his criticism.

We have prepared a Field Syllabus for students, stating the objectives of the department and giving a bibliography suggesting the range of literature we expect

our seniors to be acquainted with. How students prepare themselves for their senior year is left open—each student's program to be worked out with his field adviser, a member of our department. We urge students to take at least one course—Survey Series or Literary Studies—in each of the major areas; but there is great variety in individual programs, adapted to the student's special interests and qualifications. The Field Syllabus looms ahead as a guide—and its demands materialize concretely in Field Comprehensives, given during the Senior Year—an examination requiring some ten hours of writing, covering all the major areas. As with writing in the general education program, the expectations are clear; the student has considerable freedom in arranging to fulfill them.

During the senior year each student takes Literary Criticism and a Seminar in Literature. The latter is a study of some problem in contemporary criticism (with, of course, historical perspective)—such as a study of politics and literature, psychological criticism, literary periodicals, or dramatist and audience. It is designed to involve the entire department in an exciting discussion of an immediate question—a focus for past literary study and a bridge to applications in graduate study or other literary activity on the current scene.

Another aspect of the senior year is the possibility of an Independent Study program. Qualified students may plan (with the supervision of a faculty member, a course of study especially suited to his interests and needs which he pursues off-campus, the results to be evaluated on his return. This enables some students in the field to fill in gaps or undertake research projects which would not be possible in the normal course structure. The work program at Antioch (each student alternates periods of study with periods on some job) gives literature majors a valuable series of reading periods—and the foreign study program, enabling third- or fourth-year students to study and work for a year abroad, is a further encouragement to our majors to work independently and read widely beyond course requirements.

The special characteristics of Antioch not only help our plan work—they made it possible (or even necessary) in the first

place. Our students are carefully selected—which cuts down, but does not eliminate, the problem of students being admitted to college with limited experience, training, or skill in writing. They do an extraordinary amount of writing during their college careers—not only in courses, but in job reports (often extended essays on cultural or technical subjects related to their work experience), a freshman "Life-Aims" paper, a "Senior Paper" (autobiographical, focusing on their educational experience), a "Terminal Integrating Essay," and other writing. Such papers are read by many members of the faculty and administration, thus keeping the student aware of the necessity of writing in a presentable, clear fashion, almost as though for publication. Such demands make our job easier.

We are not on a cloud detached from the world. There were very frustrating difficulties in pushing all these changes into tangible form—and, of course, kinks appeared and are still appearing. The third-year writing check, for example, is planned but untried: we do not know if it will work. Teachers and counselors of third-year students are notified which of their students are being checked. They are asked to report whether they have had an opportunity to judge each student's writing and, if so, whether or not they consider it satisfactory. If a question is raised about any student, samples of his writing will be gathered—from job reports, course papers, etc., and examined by our department. This will be the first real test of faculty co-operation in taking community responsibility for the quality of student writing, and we are not certain of success.

There is little point in recording here the details of the program or the peculiarities of our situation which influenced its development. We hope that some of these ideas will have general usefulness. We feel the program has worked better than others we have known, and feel that we have grounds for recommending it to others. The advantages to the faculty are manifest—the freedom of choice, the chance to concentrate with few courses on limited areas. We have found, among other things, that this management of time and such flexibility of course subject-matter have

been an encouragement to our professional work other than teaching. There are advantages for the student, also—aside from the greatest advantage of all, working with relatively satisfied and interested teachers. It seems self-evident to us that they can

learn more by taking fewer courses for more credit, that they benefit from having considerable freedom in arranging their programs and yet finding it possible to take courses which provide a thorough and comprehensive coverage of the field.

### IRONY: A PRACTICAL DEFINITION

JACK C. GRAY

*An instructor at Flint (Michigan) Junior College, Mr. Gray has also taught at the University of Connecticut, where he took the M.A., and at Syracuse.*

Irony is a widely employed literary device. There are almost as many different kinds of irony as there are instances of it, and it can produce emotional and intellectual effects in endless variety. Although teachers of literature in our high schools and colleges daily call their students' attention to the device and its effects, a student may be able to recall only that the teacher labeled a particular passage as irony. He may have difficulty saying why. The student is seldom able to manipulate the term any more adroitly than to make a fuzzy equation of it with sarcasm.

Dictionary definitions do not have space to devote to a full discussion of irony, especially when it is considered solely as a technical literary term. Books of rhetoric and critical commentaries often compound the confusion by using the word in all sorts of phrases: irony of fate, conscious and unconscious irony, irony of structure, submerged irony, and so forth. Of the popular desk dictionaries, the *American College Dictionary* definition is the most complete; it includes the idea of a simulation (closest to the root meaning of the word), especially a simulation of ignorance, or Socratic irony. Irony is also defined as a trope in which an intended meaning is opposite to, or nearly opposite to an apparent meaning as in deliberate understatement and in some kinds of sarcasm. Further, it is the effect produced in tragic drama when more is revealed to the audience than to the protagonists. Finally, the idea of a nonverbal irony, or an irony of fate, is included. This kind of irony is produced when the outcome of events is widely at variance with what is expected

or what should have been or might have been. News stories dealing with children dying in a fire caused by a faulty space-heater that was to be replaced the next day generally use the word "irony" in a loose sense of the latter definition.

Irony then can be a figure of speech, an effect, an intention, an outcome, a pretended ignorance, and merely a vague sort of quality. Seeking a common bond that unifies these meanings into a practical definition useful in studying literature is likely to be exasperating and perplexing for both student and instructor. In the glossary of the third edition of *An Approach to Literature*, Brooks, Purser, and Warren state that "irony always implies a kind of contrast" (p. 817). When one is sarcastic, there is contrast between what one says and what he means; when one pretends ignorance, there is a contrast between the pretense and one's actual knowledge. When Bazarov, in Turgenev's *Father and Children*, the idol of his parents and companions and the hope of a new Russia, is taken ill and dies, we again have irony, this time in the situation, in the contrast between the fulfilment expected of Bazarov's life and the waste and futility in his death.

But not all contrast involves irony, and in their later *Modern Rhetoric*, second edition, Brooks and Warren give an amended and enlarged discussion of irony. "Irony always involves a discrepancy between the literal meaning of a statement and its actual meaning" (p. 363). In discussing the irony of fate or the irony of situation, the authors shrewdly observe "irony of situation is at least partially converted into an irony of statement by the

way in which the writer describes the situation. It is as though he did not himself see the implications of such phrases" (p. 365).

What follows is an attempt to reduce these many concepts to a clear order by distinguishing among the kinds of irony, and by grouping closely related kinds of irony and the nearly synonymous terms used to describe them.

#### VERBAL IRONY subdivides into

CONSCIOUS IRONY	UNCONSCIOUS IRONY (on the part of the speaker or narrator)
Understatement	Generally confined
Sarcasm	to tragic drama
Socratic irony	(e.g., many of Oedipus's early
Comic irony	speeches and one or two of Hamlet's)
Narrative commentary (as in Maupassant)	and narrative poetry (e.g., Prufrock's account of himself).

#### NONVERBAL IRONY

- Irony of Situation—in reference to actual events.
- Irony of Structure—in reference to the arranged situations of fiction.
- Irony of Fate—in reference to the events of tragic drama and of novels like those of Hardy.

While there is much overlapping and inexactness of definition here, the helpfulness of the chart is that it organizes the subdivisions and quickly indicates the two major categories of irony. The student is enabled immediately to see that one kind of irony involves speeches, words actually spoken by a character or narrator, and that a second major kind of irony is concerned with situations and events.

The chart serves a second and more important purpose in helping to underscore a neglected quality of irony—the shifting degrees of consciousness between speaker and hearer to the meanings implicit in the overtones of the ironic statement. As the epigraph to the poem indicates, when Prufrock speaks, he is not aware that he is revealing his neurotic personality to his hearer as fully as he does. When Hamlet (I, iv) speaks of a "vicious mole of nature" in men which "Shall in the general censure

take corruption / From that particular fault," he is scarcely aware how well he is describing himself. When Oedipus determines to punish Laius's murderer, he is ignorant that he will have to suffer his own decree; Teiresias is fully aware of the inevitable outcome as is the audience who shares Teiresias's omniscience; only partially aware of the full drama are Jocasta, Creon, and the elders of Thebes.

In sarcasm which uses irony, the speaker is fully aware that his statements embrace overtones that may or may not be understood by his listener. When employing Socratic irony as the pedagogical device it primarily is, the speaker is fully aware of the discrepancy between his real knowledge of a subject and his professed ignorance of it, but if the hearer is to learn, he must remain temporarily ignorant of the irony.

Of course, as readers or audiences discover the discrepancies and differing levels of consciousness in speeches and situations, they also discover that drama is being generated. Irony is indispensable to drama. It is also an indispensable device to all literature just as it is to the civilized author and reader. It guarantees their sanity and is a mark of their civilization. It allows them multiple viewpoints; it allows them to see themselves seeing themselves; it allows them to accept the unacceptable. Haakon M. Chevalier suggests just such a notion in his book, *The Ironic Temper: Anatole France and His Time* (1932): "Irony characterizes the attitudes of one who, when confronted with the choice of two things that are mutually exclusive, chooses both. Which is but another way of saying that he chooses neither. He cannot bring himself to give up one for the other, and he gives up both. But he reserves the right to derive from each the greatest possible passive enjoyment. And this enjoyment is Irony" (p. 42).

Under circumstances that would drive a lesser man mad, a man of the ironic temper has a broader and more flexible viewpoint. In his novel *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot*, (1959), Angus Wilson demonstrates this principle in speaking of Mrs. Eliot's agonizing acceptance of her husband's death and of her brother's equally painful acceptance of the death of his most inti-

mate friend: "Irony for both of them, as they openly agreed, was the high road to acceptance" (p. 401). Contradictions, contrasts, and discrepancies exist in irony, and while irony does not resolve the clash of

the contestants, it somehow provides an atmosphere in which both can reside without destroying each other—or the human being whose conflicts and contradictions they are.

### COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT TEACHING LOADS IN CONNECTICUT

PAUL C. WERMUTH

*Dr. Wermuth, author of a half-dozen professional articles, is an assistant professor at Central Connecticut State College. With two degrees from Boston University, he took his doctorate at Penn State.*

In the approaching enrollment situation, when ever-greater numbers of students are expected to swell class sizes, it is useful to know present teaching conditions in order to prepare for the future. Knowledge of present loads, before they get out of hand, offers some sort of comparative scale by which one may judge his own department; it may also supply some ammunition with which to resist the encroachments that are sure to come if enrollment predictions are accurate.

The present study of college teaching loads in Connecticut was undertaken at the request of my own department for its own uses; but the results seemed so interesting in the light of my experience in other states that I supposed they might prove valuable to departments everywhere. Part of this supposition springs from the fact that Connecticut is one of the wealthy northeastern states, the southernmost of the New England tier, and is traditionally noted for educational quality. For these reasons I present here to the larger audience of college English teachers the results of the investigation, together with a few of its implications.

The questionnaire was made as simple as possible in order to elicit a maximum number of replies. This meant that not much precision or subtlety was possible and that, like most such questionnaires, the answers might be subject to some qualifications.<sup>1</sup> There were nine questions, the answers to

which were to be circled or checked. Of these, the first three were the most important ones, regarding hourly schedules,<sup>2</sup> total student load, and the size of freshman classes. Here is the questionnaire:

#### CIRCLE OR CHECK THE CORRECT FIGURES

1. What is the usual teaching load, in clock hours, of full-time members of your department?

less than 10 hrs. 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18  
more than 18

2. What is the usual teaching load, in number of students, of full-time members of your department?

less than 50 50-75 75-100 100-125 125-150  
150-175 175-200 over 200

3. How large are freshman English classes?

less than 10 10-15 15-20 20-25 25-30 over 30

4. How large are required sophomore literature classes?

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<sup>1</sup>The term "clock-hours" in Question 1 proved to be somewhat ambiguous. I meant by it the usual 50-minute hour of a class period. If one teaches four 3-semester-hour courses, he has a 12-hour load. This seemed obvious enough. But it was pointed out to me by a cynical friend that some departments may not only have averaged the loads of all full-time members, thus reducing a 15-hour load to 12 or so, but also that it was possible to convert 15 50-minute hours to 12½ "clock" hours. I did not think this likely until I wrote to the colleges for permission; one president replied that if I reduced the 15-hour load of his college to 12½ "clock" hours, I could print the information. Needless to say, this college is listed among those which did not grant permission. But the reader should keep this possibility in mind in considering the figures given.

<sup>2</sup>For example, teaching load may vary from one semester to the next, or from one teacher to another within a department; thus it might be difficult to determine a "standard" load.

less than 20    20-25    25-30    30-35    35-40 over  
40

5. Do all members of the English department teach some Freshman English?

YES    NO

6. Do any members teach freshman composition exclusively?

YES    NO

7. If answer to 6 is YES, do these teachers have a lighter load in terms of clock hours, or heavier, or the same?

LIGHTER    HEAVIER    SAME

8. Do you expect an increase in the number of freshmen next fall?

YES    NO

9. If YES, how do you expect to provide for it?

- a. Increase staff
- b. Increase size of classes
- c. Try mechanical devices, such as TV
- d. Try other ways of arranging the

course, such as the Oregon Plan, etc.

The response was both surprising and gratifying: all the department chairmen to whom I wrote replied, though in a few cases the answers were somewhat incomplete. We have, therefore, an unusually complete picture of some of the conditions of college English teaching in the state, at least insofar as the questions went. It should be emphasized that only those colleges and universities were polled which are accredited by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the regional accrediting body, as reported in the latest edition of *Higher Education*.<sup>3</sup> To the best of my knowledge, then, there are sixteen accredited colleges in Connecticut,<sup>4</sup> and their replies to the questionnaire are presented below in tabulated form; the colleges are listed alphabetically.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Education Directory, 1958-1959, Part 3, published by the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The one exception here is Willimantic State College, which was admitted to the New England Association in December 1958, as I belatedly discovered in the official publication of the NEACSS.

<sup>4</sup>Except the Hartt College of Music, which though accredited does not have full-time teachers of English. "Accredited" here means accredited by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools as a 4-year institution granting bachelor's degrees.

<sup>5</sup>Because the original questionnaire contained no hint that the information might be published, I felt it necessary to ask the colleges for their permission to print it. Two refused: Hillyer College of Hartford, and the University of Bridgeport. All others gave consent.

<sup>6</sup>Enrollment figures here are from *Higher Education* and include the "total enrollment of students of college grade, excluding correspondence students, in the fall of 1957." Several colleges complained that the figures were inaccurate, or included both part- and full-time students, graduate and undergraduate. The point is not very important since I merely wanted a rough figure for purposes of comparison; but the reader might keep in mind these complaints about the accuracy of the figures. Nonetheless, I have corrected the figures for Albertus Magnus, Connecticut Col-

lege, and Wesleyan University in accordance with their wishes.

<sup>7</sup>No required sophomore literature.

<sup>8</sup>Judging by the size of freshman and sophomore classes, and the total hourly schedule, this figure is quite probably mistaken.

<sup>9</sup>No required sophomore literature; figure is for senior lit.

<sup>10</sup>Actual reply was "less than 10," lowest figure on the sheet.

<sup>11</sup>Unaccountably left unanswered on the sheet.

<sup>12</sup>Some members teach freshman English "almost exclusively."

<sup>13</sup>Actually, about 1000 male undergraduates, the rest being co-educational nonresident graduate students in evening sessions.

<sup>14</sup>Some department members have 9 hours plus research. These figures apply only to main campus at Storrs.

<sup>15</sup>Except teaching fellows.

<sup>16</sup>Enrollment figures for branches not separately stated in *Higher Education*. Presumably they are included in the total.

<sup>17</sup>No full-time staff teaching English; branch is "very small."

<sup>18</sup>Supervisor of this branch, for some reason, sent the questionnaire to main campus, so no answers were received.

<sup>19</sup>Actual reply was "less than 10."

<sup>20</sup>Sophomore literature not required.

<sup>21</sup>With elective in American literature.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT TEACHING LOADS IN CONNECTICUT, 1958-1959

	Albertus Magnus	13	75-100	20-25	-7	No	No	Yes	x	280 W
Annhurst College	12	Less than 50*	25-30	30-35	Yes	No	Yes	x	154 W	
Central Conn. S. C.	15	75-125	20-25	20-25	Yes	No	Yes	x	2,194 Co.	
Coast Guard Academy	15	75-100	15-20	Less than 20*	Yes	Yes	Lighter	No	574 M	
Connecticut College	910	—11	21	20-25	Yes	No	No		931 W	
Danbury S. C.	15	125-175	20-25	30-35	Yes	No	Yes	x	714 Co.	
Fairfield University	12	100-125	25-30	25-30	No	No13	No		1,351 M	
Hillyer College	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
St. Joseph College	10-12	75-100	25-30	25-30	No	No	Yes	x	477 W	
Southern Conn. S. C.	15	175-200	Over 30	Over 40	No	No	No		2,266 Co.	
Trinity College	9	50-75	15-20	20-25	Yes	No	No		1,452 M13	
University of Bridgeport	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
University of Conn.	1214	75-100	20	35	Yes	No13	No		10,210 Co.	
Hartford Branch	12	75-100	20-25	30-40	Yes	No	No		16,	
Stamford Branch	15	100-125	15-20	30-35	Yes	No	Yes	x		
Torrington Branch	—17	—	10-15	20	Yes	Yes	Same	Yes	x	
Waterbury Branch	—18	—	—	—	—	—	—			
Wesleyan University	918	50-75	15-20	20-25*	No	No	Yes	x	762 M	
Willimantic S. C.	15	100-125	25-30	25-30	No	Yes11	Same	Yes	x	480 Co.
Yale University	9	50-75	15-20	20-25	No	No	No		7,229 M	

If yes to 8,  
how will you  
provide?

- Emrollment and sex  
of students\*
- Change organization  
Use mech. devives
- Increase class size  
Increase staff
- Do you expect im-  
crease next fall?
- If yes to 6, is  
load lighter, same,  
or heavier?
- Do all members  
teach freshman  
only freshman  
English?
- Do any teach  
freshman  
and English?
- Size of required  
classes
- Size of freshman  
classes
- Usual load in  
clock-hours
- Usual load in  
number of Students
- Size of required  
classes
- Do all members  
teach freshman  
and English?
- If yes to 6, is  
load lighter, same,  
or heavier?
- Do you expect im-  
crease next fall?
- Increase class size  
Increase staff
- Use mech. devives
- Change organization  
Emrollment and sex  
of students\*

At first glance, the reader will be struck by the wide variations here. Some college teachers of English in the state have as few as 50 students and some four times as many. Freshman classes range from 15 students to over 30; literature classes from less than 20 to over 40. Of the total hourly load in the 16 colleges, four have a teaching schedule of 9 hours, 5 have around 12 hours, and 7 have 15 hours. In order to make some of the figures more immediately meaningful, there follows a ranking of the colleges according to their hourly schedules;<sup>22</sup> those which are equal within each group are arranged alphabetically.

9 hours: Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan University, Yale University

10-12 hours: St. Joseph College

12 hours: Annhurst College, Fairfield University, University of Connecticut

13 hours: Albertus Magnus

15 hours: Central Conn. S.C., Coast Guard Academy, Danbury S.C., Southern Conn. S.C., Willimantic S.C.

The second ranking of the colleges that follows is according to their total student load; once again, those that are equal within groups are alphabetically arranged. The names of the colleges will be shortened from this point on. (Connecticut College and Annhurst do not appear in this ranking because they did not answer this question.)

50-75 Trinity, Wesleyan, Yale

75-100 Albertus Magnus, Coast Guard Academy, St. Joseph, Univ. of Connecticut

75-125 Central Conn. State College

100-125 Fairfield Univ., Willimantic S.C.

125-175 Danbury S.C.

175-200 Southern Conn. S.C.

In the third ranking following, the col-

leges are arranged according to the size of their freshman classes, and the arrangement is again alphabetical within groups.

15-20 Coast Guard Academy, Trinity, Wesleyan, Yale

20-25 Univ. of Connecticut (20), Connecticut College (21), Albertus Magnus, Central Conn. S.C.

25-30 Annhurst, Danbury S.C., Fairfield Univ., St. Joseph, Willimantic S.C.

Over 30 Southern Conn. S.C.

Although the size of sophomore required literature classes is often considered less important than the size of freshman classes, the information on this score is interesting; the following is a ranking of the colleges according to the size of required literature classes. (Albertus Magnus is absent from this ranking because it does not require a literature course.)

Less than 20 Coast Guard Academy (*senior lit.*)

20-25 Central Conn. S.C., Connecticut College, Trinity, Wesleyan, Yale

25-30 Danbury S.C., Fairfield Univ., St. Joseph, Willimantic S.C.

30-35 Annhurst

35 Univ. of Conn.

Over 40 Southern Conn. S.C.

Although, as can be seen, there is much movement up and down in the middle of the scales, there is some consistency at both ends. Assuming that the first three of the rankings are the most important ones, the colleges that consistently appear in the first group of each ranking are Wesleyan, Yale, and Trinity. (Connecticut College might also have been in this group if the information to Question 2 were available.) Note that these colleges are also in the first group of the fourth ranking, too. At the opposite end of the scales, the two state colleges at Danbury and New Haven fall into the last group in all three rankings; indeed, Southern Connecticut State College at New Haven apparently has in all respects the heaviest English department teaching load of any accredited college in Connecticut.

The other colleges shift back and forth, some being better in one thing than an-

<sup>22</sup>The information from the University of Connecticut branches is incomplete, though there is enough to suggest some difference in teaching loads between the main campus and the branches. The branches are not counted here as separate colleges, and do not appear in the rankings.

other; yet in some respects they are much alike. Consistency here is difficult to see: the Coast Guard Academy has relatively light loads and small classes despite a 15-hour schedule, while Fairfield University has relatively heavy loads and large classes despite a 12-hour schedule. Surprisingly, the only colleges in the state with schedules of around 12 hours are the state university and the four Catholic colleges, the latter of which seem to have generally fairly large classes (with the possible exception of Albertus Magnus) and seem to be pretty much on a par with each other.

In a recent issue of *College English* (March 1959, pp. 311-312) it was reported that a resolution reaffirmed at the recent NCTE convention recommended a 12-hour schedule and freshman classes of 25 as maximum desirable figures for college English teachers. If we apply these two standards to the 16 colleges represented here, we find that *only 5* measure up: Connecticut College, Trinity, University of Connecticut, Wesleyan, and Yale. (Albertus Magnus narrowly misses by virtue of a 13-hour schedule.) This information may surprise some who may think of Connecticut as one of the "progressive" states. But the picture may not be as bad as it sounds. Although over two-thirds of the state's accredited colleges fail to measure up to these standards, we can see by their enrollment figures that the one-third that does measure up contains over half the students in the state (20,584 of 37,697). One might assume, therefore, that a good bit over half of the college students in the state are being taught English under favorable conditions. This does not, however, necessarily bode well for the state's own natives. These five colleges, being the most cosmopolitan ones, probably have a smaller proportion of state residents than the others. The remaining 17,000-odd students, then, may include more Connecticut natives than the larger figure. If this is so, then a Connecticut resident's chances of being taught English under favorable circumstances in a Connecticut college are less than 50-50.

Although comparisons are supposed to

be odious, the interested reader may wish, on the basis of the information here, to work out some comparative rating of the colleges involved. But one might deduce other interesting suggestions from this small amount of information. For example, how do the colleges compare with each other according to type? Clearly the great private colleges are in the lead, followed by the state university. Next would probably come the Catholic colleges and the federal academy, the latter, despite its 15-hour schedule, offering somewhat better conditions than the former. The state colleges<sup>23</sup> and the two unidentified city (but privately operated) colleges bring up the rear, with Central Connecticut State College leading this group.

The remaining information revealed by the questionnaire, such as the number of colleges where some persons teach composition exclusively, is perhaps of minor importance here. The last two questions, however, have some relevance. It is interesting to note that of the 16 colleges, 9 expect increased enrollments next year; most of these (except Wesleyan) tend toward the lower end of the scale and taken together now have roughly one-third of the students in the state (13,684 of 37,697).<sup>24</sup> This increase in enrollment is expected to be handled in 5 of the institutions by enlarging the staff, in 2 by increasing class sizes, and in two others by a combination of both methods. But it is perhaps revealing that no college checked either of the other two methods of handling the increase. Presumably no accredited college in Connecticut is planning to use television in the near future or to change the organization of freshman English in any radical way.

<sup>23</sup>The four teachers colleges in Connecticut changed their names to state colleges as of July 1, 1959. Teachers College of Conn. became Central Conn. S.C.; New Haven S.T.C. became Southern Conn. S.C.; Danbury and Willimantic simply dropped "Teachers" from their titles.

<sup>24</sup>The figure 37,697 includes the enrollment of the two colleges which refused permission.

## THE PENNSYLVANIA SURVEY

RUSSELL N. DEVINNEY

*The author, formerly a professor of Air Science at Penn State, is now an instructor at the Allentown Center of the University. With degrees from Muhlenberg and Lehigh, he is proceeding to a Columbia doctoral degree.*

The recently organized Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English chose as one of its service projects a teacher-load survey. The committee sent questionnaires to teachers of English on the high school and college level. The results of the college section survey should be of significance because of the diversity of the state's institutions of higher learning.

H. R. Reidenbaugh, Executive Secretary of the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities reported in the 1955 Pennsylvania Conference on Education that there are 84 approved colleges and universities in the Commonwealth. Of this total, 14 are state-owned, 12 are state-aided, and 58 are independent. Forty-six offer only the bachelor's degree, 23 offer the first degree plus the M.A. or second professional degree, and 15 have offerings through the Ph.D. There are 12 junior colleges.

In the Fall of 1957 a personal letter was sent to the chairman of the English departments of the 96 institutions. 66 responses were received in which the names of people teaching English full and part time were listed. The range here in departmental strength showed a contrast of from two persons teaching all the English subjects in the small private college to 54 persons teaching English composition in the large university. 691 questionnaires were then sent to all college teachers of English, of whom 370 (53.5%) responded.

The questionnaire considered separately the Fall and Spring semesters of the academic year 1957-58, during which time the average work week of the full-time college English teacher was about 48 hours. He carried an average semester hour load of about 13 hours (the range here was from 8 to 18 hours) with an average student load of 108.

The English teacher devoted the average time of 6 hours to composition, 5 hours to literature, and 1½ hours to "other subjects"

(foreign languages, the arts, history, philosophy, and religion).

An average of 15 hours per week was spent in preparation, 10 hours in the evaluation of students, 5 hours in individual counseling, and 5 hours in service to the institution. The average number of themes required per semester of English composition students was 10, that of remedial English students, 7. The average number of years spent in the teaching of English was found to be 14, teaching college English, 11.

A significant statistic revealed in the survey is that about 10% of the students taking English composition courses (Fall 1957) in 63 institutions of higher learning in the state were taking remedial (non-credit) English.

There was a wealth of comment on each question in the survey. One colleague refrained from indicating the number of hours spent in preparation because he regarded that as a professional secret! Another pointed out a serious omission in that we did not question the number of hours spent in scholarly and creative work. Another indicated that our questions were impossible to answer. Some of the remarks reflected disillusionment: "Poor salary; big educational background required; no advancement; no part in formulating policy."

21 chairmen completed the questionnaire; hence we considered them separately. The average work week was found to be about 52 hours. The average semester hour load was about 8½ hours, and the average semester student load was about 65. The chairmen averaged 10 hours per week in preparation, 7 hours in evaluation, 3 hours in individual counseling, and 24 hours in service to the institution. The average number of years spent in the teaching of English was found to be 23, teaching college English, 19.

## Ishmael to Ahab

JUDSON JEROME

Aboard my wallowing coffin, humble, I  
reject this cowardly gratitude; the gods  
who spared me from your damning did so with  
disdain. This other life is in the theater  
of the last life, but closer now I see  
the shallow drops and hear the hollow stage;  
small wonder this mock quarterdeck could not  
your tread maintain.

The dull phlegmatic sea  
accepts without a hiss the sinking sun;  
it vomits back the chips and me unharmed.  
Somewhere the whale, with his scarred cloud of brow  
bleeding no pain, conscription served, returns  
to silent and to equal company,  
and the cool crests that topple where we were,  
no more oblivious than he. Your eyes  
gape and your body, fouled in hemp, compressed  
by sea, is circling stiffly through the cold  
and dark; in timeless insubordination  
this wreck of you shows more of search  
than of obedience in its gravitation.

Enormously objective I can see  
you have found more than you will find again.  
In search of knowledge you have found an end  
of knowing—knowing, though, is not your call:  
conviction, even as you fall, misleads;  
the soggy bottom, still this side of God,  
like Moby Dick, is but a further wall.

O fool, Ahab, and twice a hasty fool!  
to strike at malice where it cannot be!  
Or—if the whale were conscious as you thought—  
to strike for striking, strike to beg defeat!  
O holy fools who gave your minds to gods,  
you savages and puritans at odds,  
all following Ahab in a fog of credence  
with fevered praises and with curses shrill,  
expect not nature's credit or retreat—  
deaf is the strength of growing things and still!

I followed you and served, with some dissent,  
and swear that had there been a knowing god  
faced you across your quarterdeck with the rest,  
that god would have joined Ahab in his quest;  
though several of us thought you wrong not one

preferred his rightness to your fiery sin—  
there is a manly power in belief  
that, comprehending, I could not quite share;  
and yet I could not comprehend its pull—  
for when you met your hell and I was saved,  
I felt regret.

This other hell where I  
am left is but a sickly place where we  
unworthy simper righteous trust, discreet;  
this hell rewards with no such woman's gift  
as grace. It disregards, but if a man  
be great, it turns annoyed and thanks him with its hate.  
Not even that. I know not that.  
A-sea in comprehension, I have none;  
no creed of love or hate on which to build;  
a moment's thought, and schools of Moby Dicks,  
and Christs and countries, mistresses of mind,  
suddenly naught.

Could I resign my rightness  
and my strength to gods to whom they are  
not worth the taking, or, like Ahab, thrust  
my spear in any clear contention, then  
lose scope, be damned to narrow ignorance,  
in the closed world believe a fragment of truth,  
fragment of nonsense, *could* I but do this. . . .  
did I not comprehend my very wish. . . .  
the glory of my chase would soon obscure  
the failure of my voyage; no one fails  
who numb to truth pursues to the last lowering  
and dying can mistake his own blood spouting  
for the whale's.

Now casual scud clouds  
ride low before the wind, besmudged and tattered,  
helpless they sail, and fail to fill the sky.  
My coffin has no keel; by a dumb gull,  
hiding his legs, crossing the moon, am I  
mocked, with now foot and now skull at the bow.

# Current English Forum

## THE PASSIVE CONSTRUCTION

MARGARET M. BRYANT

*Author of numerous studies of language and folklore, Dr. Bryant is a professor at Brooklyn College and Chairman of the NCTE's Committee on Current English. Questions about usage should be sent her at 1 Montague Terrace, Brooklyn 1, N. Y.*

When a verb construction indicates that the subject is being acted upon instead of performing the action, it is said to be in the passive. (Actually it is the subject that is passive.) The purpose of the passive is to transpose the active object into the passive subject, so that "She wrote a letter," for example, becomes "A letter was written by her." The added phrase *by her* can be dropped at will, so that the passive becomes a useful method of omitting the original subject. Instead of "Charles called me on the telephone," one may avoid mentioning the name by saying: "I was called on the telephone."

Generations of textbook writers have warned against the use of the passive, but its uses have increased, especially with the growing up of the perfect and progressive tenses. It is especially useful in scientific writing.

Recent studies reveal the comparative use of the passive. One study based on reading in the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine found the passive employed in 13% of the occurrences and the active in 87% (participles and infinitives not included). Another study made on the basis of reading the *Harvard Business Review* showed the passive used in 8% of the examples and the active in 92%. A third study based on the reading of an article from each of twenty different magazines found the passive employed 7.5% of the time and the active 92.5%. One of the studies also included advertising, short stories, and a novel. In advertising, the passive occurred 4.8% of the time and the active 95.2%; in the short stories, 1.8% and the active 98.2%; in the novel, .9% and the active 99.1%. These studies reveal that the passive occurs more often in expository prose than in narrative writing, where it occurs rather infrequently.

The passive is employed when the receiver of the action is more important than the doer: "The child was struck by

the car." The doer of the action may be unknown or is not to be mentioned in the statement; he may be unimportant or may be obvious: "The travel agency was robbed last night" (unknown); "The desk was opened while I was out of the room" (not to be mentioned); "Guns should not be kept in the home" (doer unimportant); "Joseph Etson was elected Congressman from his district" (obvious). It also permits varying degrees of emphasis. One may place the doer or the action done at the end or at the beginning of the sentence: "The car is being repaired," or "The car is being repaired by Jack Swift."

The passive is employed in both formal and informal English. Fries (*American English Grammar*) found that the passive was used much more frequently in standard English than in vulgar. For example, the *to-infinitive* with a substantive subject, all serving as object of a verb, as "They directed me to return," occurred 53 times (71.6%) in the vulgar English materials and only 21 times (28.4%) in the standard English letters, whereas the *to-infinitive* depending upon a main verb in the passive, as "I was directed to return," occurred very infrequently in the vulgar English letters, but more than three times as often in the standard English letters. The passive has established itself and found its uses in modern English, probably because of its impersonality.

Although the passive is generally formed by adding the verb *to be* to the past participle of the verb, in colloquial English it sometimes employs other verbs like *get* and *become*, as in "He got acquainted with Miss Fox in the office" or "The buildings on Juniper Street became filled with people people from State Street." This pseudo-passive with *get* or *become* often suggests the idea of process, as contrasted with state, suggested by the *be*-passive. Compare "The house was built of stone" and "The house got built in record time."

## News and Ideas

*For literary articles, see the Council's monthly Abstracts of English Studies.*

**AN UNUSUAL LITERARY ISSUE OF** a magazine appears as the Fall 1959 *Historical Review of Berks County* (940 Centre Ave., Reading, Pa.), which is entirely a Wallace Stevens number. Reprinting ten poems, the issue is most valuable in its article by Michael Lafferty (Colorado School of Mines), which contains new biographical material, and a long study of Stevens's notion of the Imagination, by Ronald L. Sweitzer, a Yale graduate student doubling as an investment counselor in Reading.

**UNTIL A NATIONAL STATEMENT** is made on behalf of college and school-teachers in formulating standards for articulating school and college English, state and regional groups may profit by models already worked out. In addition to the California statement published in the November *College English*, more detailed manifestos are available from Indiana (write the Dept. of English at the University). Illinois (write the Office of Publication at the University) puts out a manifest of *Standards in Freshman Rhetoric* containing sample graded themes and a placement test.

**NEW LITERARY MAGAZINES:** *Critical Quarterly*, whose British editors are "heirs to what is viable in *Scrutiny's* estate," according to its American representative, Professor R. J. Kaufman, now receiving MSS. and subscriptions at Department of English, University of Rochester; and *The Massachusetts Review*, ditto at the University of Massachusetts.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN IS** offering five post-doctoral fellowships of \$8000 each for students in College Administration in its Center for the Study of Higher Education, as well as predoctoral fellowships of \$1000 to \$3000. Deadline: 1 February 1960.

**THE EPIC STRUGGLE BETWEEN** Grove Press and New American Library

over the publication rights on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* has come to a gentlemanly settlement of differences. Laurentians and literary historians will be interested in the October Joint Statement, as well as in the many hot releases sent out by Grove in their all-out effort during the summer and early fall. They may have some left over.

**TEACHERS AND GRADUATES OF** Renaissance Drama will welcome the news that the report of the 1958 MLA session on the subject of opportunities for research is now available to them in mimeographed form. The 47-page document contains not only a second supplement to the list of projects currently underway but also a long checklist of Elizabethan and Stuart plays that need editing. Write to Prof. Samuel Schoenbaum at Northwestern.

**TWO AMUSING AND TOUCHING** recollections of Ezra Pound as a college teacher, before his Rossettian involvement with a "chorus girl," appear in the Spring 1959 *Wabash College Review*, a publication of the English Department.

"... THAT LITERALLY THOUSANDS of devoted teachers, supervisors, and administrators are presently engaged in a massive project of evaluation, appraisal, revision, and implementation of courses of study in English at all levels" is the conclusion of Dr. Joseph Mersand, 1959 President of NCTE, after his own massive survey of all levels of opinions. His summary of what is being done and what should be done—the full report will appear later—is the lead article in the Fall 1959 *English Record* of the N. Y. State English Council, which also contains an incisive article on high school-college articulation by Gerald A. Smith (Oneonta) and a trenchant analysis of what James Gould Cozzens has and doesn't have, by Earl Harlan (Plattsburg). This is the tenth anniversary number of the *Record*, the organ of a state council that boasts its own executive secretary (Hans

Gottschalk, Geneseo). Membership or subscription is \$2.

**CORNELL UNIVERSITY PROPOSES** to give \$1500 each to forty qualified students for one year of graduate work leading to a career of teaching in junior high schools. The year consists of two semesters and a summer, and includes a responsible internship in a local public school. Write the Cornell School of Education.

**A LAN SWALLOW, PUBLISHER** (Denver) is issuing a dozen paperbacks in a new series this year, including Allen Tate's *The Fathers*, Frederick Manfred's *Morning Red*, two short novels of Janet Lewis, and J. V. Cunningham's *Collected Poems*—to mention just the most literary-academic titles.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA** (Edmonton), encouraged by the success of two previous sessions, will hold its third Summer School of Linguistics July 4-August 13 this year. For information about courses and about financial assistance, write soon to Dr. Ernest Reinhold, Director of the School.

**TWO ADMIRABLE TREATMENTS OF** the problem of what careers besides teaching English majors can enter: (1) a 35-page pamphlet issued by the Department of English at Louisiana State (Thomas A. Kirby, chairman; Baton Rouge, La.) and available at 25¢ a copy, and (2) a 2½-page article by Albert W. Vogel (Washington-Lee High School, Arlington, Va.) in the October 1959 *Virginia English Bulletin* (Editor, Professor Foster B. Gresham, Longwood College, Farmville, Va.).

**DESPITE THE SPORADIC PROGRESS** of structural linguistics, of descriptive grammar, and of functional notions of usage, a survey of fifty-five years of studies in these fields as applied in the schools shows that most teachers still teach a "traditional, conventional, formal, systematic, prescriptive, normative grammar" to American students. "The impressive fact is, however, that in all these studies, carried out in places and at times far removed from each other, often by highly experienced and disinterested investigators, the results

*have been consistently negative so far as the value of grammar in the improvement of language expression is concerned*" (italics added). These are the conclusions of a substantial article in *Elementary English*, the grade-school counterpart of *College English*, for October 1959, by its experienced editor, Professor John J. DeBoer of the University of Illinois. The whole article and its sixty references would be most enlightening to any college teacher of English.

**WITH THE BELATED INTEREST** college teachers are now showing in high school work, *College English*'s parent and sibling, *The English Journal*, becomes more and more relevant. The October 1959 issue, for example, contains a valuable summary of the latest results of CEEB Advanced Placement examinations, which concludes that the May 1958 candidates who got good scores on either the literature examination or the combination of literature and composition got better placement, credit, or both than those who took only the composition test, even though they did well on it. As if to bear out the increased advanced nature of such school courses, the principal of the Jacksonville Beach (Fla.) High School contributes an excellent article on the poetry of—not Robert Frost or Robinson or Sandburg—Wallace Stevens. Teachers who make use of, or who need persuading that they ought to make use of, the mass media on which their students are so dependent should follow the lively and judicious department, *The Public Arts*, by Patrick D. Hazard of the University of Pennsylvania.

**ALL HUMAN BEINGS BETWEEN** forty and sixty who teach the humanities should read the stirring, highly metaphorical address that Robert B. Heilman (U. Washington, *College English* adviser) delivered to the Rocky Mountain MLA in 1958, now reprinted in the AAUP *Bulletin* for September 1959 from *The Western Humanities Review* of Winter 1959, "Fashions in Melodrama," which attacks the melodramatic, i.e., one-sided views of looking at struggles of science vs. the humanities, youth vs. age, and education vs. Education.

## Books

*This section restricts itself to brief notices of textbooks and critical works, chiefly by American college teachers of English, that will be of use to the reader in his role of classroom teacher. All unsigned material is by the Editor.*

**FORMS OF MODERN FICTION: ESSAYS COLLECTED IN HONOR OF JOSEPH WARREN BEACH**, ed. William Van O'Connor (Indiana, 1959, 291 pp., paper, \$1.75). The Midland Series reprints O'Connor's 1948 anthology of essays running from Eliot on *Ulysses* (1923) to the classic New Critical document, Schorer's "Technique as Discovery" (1948). A piece on the Brontës somehow slipped in, but the rest are mostly by well-known quarterly names on well-known modern novelists. It does seem a little dated—until one starts applying the comments to the original works.

**SISTER CARRIE**, Theodore Dreiser (Houghton Mifflin, 1959, 418 pp., paper, 95¢). A Riverside Edition, this reprint contains a first-rate introduction by Claude Simpson (Ohio State) that shows both the shocking and the conventional aspects of the 1900 novel, both the subjective and the formal qualities of this "naturalistic" work, and the "moral ambiguities" that while hardly Jamesian do give some richness to the narrative line.

**LITERATURE AND THE OTHER ARTS: A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1952-1958**, comp. Alfred R. Neumann (N.Y. Public Library, 1959, 39 pp., paper, \$1). A helpful list of 269 items, brought together by the MLA discussion group identified in the title.

**LITERATURE IN AMERICA**, ed. Philip Rahv (Meridian, 1957, 452 pp., paper, \$1.95). This anthology, one of the best of recent selections of literary criticism, contains classic items from de Tocqueville to Warren on Faulkner, hitting most of our major writers—although the taste of the editor (Barnard) may be signified by his having three essays on James and none on Thoreau. One might also quarrel with the fact that a dozen papers are selections or

abridgments, but one can hardly be anything but grateful for having such a substantial variety massed in one volume.

**THE ENGLISH NOVEL, 1578-1856: A CHECKLIST OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY CRITICISMS**, Inglis F. Bell and Donald Baird (Swallow, 1959, 169 pp., \$3). An excellent successor to the same firm's *Arms and Kuntz Poetry Explication*, this vari-typed list selects modern explications of novels from *Euphues* to the present. Bell's introduction is a good survey of the changes in attitudes towards the novel in the last hundred years.

**WILLIAM FAULKNER: AN ESTIMATE OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE MODERN AMERICAN NOVEL**, Mary Cooper Robb (Pittsburgh, 1957, 70 pp., paper, \$1.80). Nothing new, but an interesting defense of Faulkner's unity, morality, and technique against those who have disparaged them.

**THE COMIC TRADITION IN AMERICA**, ed. Kenneth S. Lynn (Doubleday, 1958, 463 pp. \$5). An anthology chiefly of nineteenth-century American humor, with some of the familiar selections and some of editor's own choices—Lynn's test being whether or not the material was funny. The editorial connective tissue is excellent, some of it shaming the adjacent selections.

**THE LAST OF THE PROVINCIALS: THE AMERICAN NOVEL, 1915-1920**, Maxwell Geismar (Hill and Wang, 1959, 404 pp., \$2.45). Reprint of the 1947 volume on Mencken, Lewis, Cather, Anderson, and Fitzgerald—part of the series that includes *Writers in Crisis* and *Rebels and Ancestors*. Geismar's view of Lewis as a fantasist is still the most intelligible view of that writer.

**ROUGHING IT**, Mark Twain (Harper, 1959, 330 pp., \$1.25). Reprinting of old plates, plus the judicious introduction one expects of Henry Nash Smith (California)—who makes it clear why *Roughing It* is an imaginative, though not a great book.

**THE HOLY BARBARIANS**, Lawrence Lipton (Messner, 1959, 318 pp., \$4.95). Older cat Lipton writes with deceptive clarity about the beats who live in Venice West, California—their sex, poverty, jazz, art, Orientalism—as the “alienated nonconformists” who are practicing “a secession from the business civilization itself.” Lipton’s clear prose is deceptive because it never goes much deeper than the eight pages of photographs of beats in the book: it makes the reader see the barbarianism but not the holiness.

**CHANGING VALUES IN COLLEGE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF COLLEGE TEACHING**, Philip E. Jacob (Harper, 1957, 174 pp., \$3.50). The now-famous survey by Professor Jacob (Political Science, U. Pa.), based on a half-dozen separate surveys, shows that liberal education generally fails to liberalize: “The impact of the college experience is rather to *socialize* the individual, to refine, polish, or ‘shape up’ his values so that he can fit comfortably into the ranks of American college alumni.” Neither the curriculum, nor the instructor, nor the teaching method can be guaranteed to change, deepen, or broaden those notions about man and society that the student holds when he arrives on campus—although a few colleges and a few teachers may be said to have some effect. The Jacob report has already been challenged, and one may note that it “has been primarily concerned with that part of the curriculum which fulfills a general education function in the social sciences,” but it certainly documents any teacher’s impression that for the most part this is a coolly materialistic generation of college students.

**THE TWO ENDS OF THE LOG: LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TODAY’S COLLEGE**, ed. Russell M. Cooper (Minnesota, 1958, 317 pp., \$4). This is a comprehensive examination of all the prob-

lems of college teaching, based on the Minnesota Centennial Conference on the subject in 1958. The summarizers, mostly social scientists, tell us what the sessions thought about student motivation, gifted students, critical thinking, changes in teaching, evaluating teaching, new techniques, and so on, providing dozens of helpful tips or problems to be solved that any teacher can profit by. Perhaps the most interesting practical reference is Keith Tyler’s report of Benjamin Bloom’s conclusion that no matter whether the teacher uses lectures, discussions, or recitations in the classroom, it is the student’s *covert* rather than *overt* participation that is the significant educational factor.

**KEATS’ WELL-READ URN: AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY METHOD**, Harvey T. Lyon (Holt, 1958, 117 pp., paper, \$1.60). Professor Lyon (Pennsylvania) offers the reader “exhibits” in the form of the texts of six of Keats’s odes, excerpts from twenty-nine of Keats’s letters, and selections from or abstracts of over eighty critical commentaries on the “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” In presenting this variety of material, the author hopes to demonstrate the limitations of any single critical method and to convert the reader to the cause of eclecticism. An unusual compendium, it should prove exciting reading especially to those students who are taking a course in Romantic poetry or literary criticism. However, it is regrettable that Professor Lyon did not see fit to provide more guidance in the various critical methods—historical, textual, philosophical, biographical, psychological, cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic—which are illustrated by his short volume.

RICHARD P. BENTON  
TRINITY COLLEGE, CONNECTICUT

**PASSAGES FROM FINNEGANS WAKE, BY JAMES JOYCE: A FREE ADAPTATION FOR THE THEATER**, Mary Manning (Harvard, 1957, 73 pp., \$3.25). This is the Way to Joyce’s *tour de force*: six dramatized scenes selected and given apprehensible dimension by a sensitive Dubliner. No. 3 in the Poets’ Theatre Series.

**THE BROKEN COMPASS: A STUDY OF THE IMAGERY IN BEN JOHNSON'S COMEDIES**, Edward B. Partridge (Chatto and Windus, 1958, n.p.l.). The first part of the book (by Partridge of Bucknell) almost breaks its own compass in the sense that a workable definition of imagery is repeatedly being proposed and marred. The discussion of the theories of imagery that have been put forth from the Elizabethan era to our own is decidedly turgid. One is tempted to apply Partridge's own one-sided dictum that a play "is not literature . . . because it was not originally put down on paper in order to be read" to this part of his own book. But with a fairly detailed discussion of *Volpone* the book suddenly takes vigorous life. Occasionally in the midst of careful explication de texte (as on p. 72) a significant image is not commented on—"like a flame, by night" fits perfectly into the perversion of religious imagery, being the corollary of the "cloud by day," an image of the Godhead. Partridge's biggest lacuna, however, is in his neglect of the effect of the Masque and masquing techniques in *Volpone* (Nano and Castrone form the rude antimasque to the "lordly" Masque of Volpone and the unwitting Celia). The final lines of the song which climaxes the mock-Masque episode are not "Tis no sinne etc" but "That the curious etc"). Nevertheless the chapter on *Volpone* and the one on *The Alchemist* are the best of the book and a worthy contribution to Renaissance study.

JOHN P. CUTTS

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

**TOWARD READING COMPREHENSION**, Julia Florence Sherbourne (Heath, 1958, 248 pp., \$2.75). Professor Sherbourne's reading program is designed to be remedial as well as developmental. A wealth of exercise material makes the volume thoroughly adaptable to either purpose. Instructions and explanations are brief and clear. The reading selections are varied in length, stimulating, and occasionally humorous in content.

RALPH M. WILLIAMS

TRINITY COLLEGE

**THE MUSES MOURN: A CHECKLIST OF VERSE OCCASIONED BY THE**

**DEATH OF CHARLES II**, John Alden (Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia, 1958, 62 pp., \$4). 68 separate items described, located, and indexed as to first lines.

**JOSEPH CONRAD: A STUDY IN NON-CONFORMITY**, Osborn Andreas (Philosophical Library, 1959, 212 pp., \$3.75). A Conrad primer, wherein each story and novel receives a chapter consisting of plot summary and a paragraph or so of comment, with a final chapter summarizing the view that Conrad's works center on non-conformism—quite a different procedure from the synthesizing study of Henry James by Andreas, a Chicago businessman.

**FOLKLORE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE**, ed. John T. Flanagan and Arthur P. Hudson (Row, Peterson, 1958, 511 pp., n.p.l.). A fine collection and selection of the stories, songs, and sketches about American Indians, devils, ghosts, buried treasure, tall happenings, heroes, Yankees, Negroes, and wisdoms, from Franklin to Faulkner, done by well-known scholars from Illinois and North Carolina. As with other Row, Peterson texts, this is remarkable for its fine printing and appropriate cuts.

**HOW TO HOLD A BETTER MEETING**, Frank Snell (Harper, 1958, 149 pp., \$2.25). Although designed for businessmen, this book (by an account executive formerly Head of Speech at Columbia) ought to be forced on every college person who has to run meetings. Snell's main points: the importance of clear agenda, of seating arrangement, of size and length, and of the chairman's leadership.

**AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES: A SURVEY OF COLLEGE PROGRAMS**, Robert H. Walker (Louisiana State, 1958, 210 pp., paper, \$3). Done for the ASA by Walker of Wyoming, this ought to supply all the facts one wants to know about the movement, presented in the form of a directory to individual programs across the country and a summary-analysis chapter.

**HAMLET**, ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia L. Freund (Pocket Books, 1958, 150 pp., paper, 35¢). This edition contains even

fuller introductory material than any of the earlier volumes of Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare. Besides chapters on the text, the life of Shakespeare, and the theatre, we find enlightening essays on "The popularity of *Hamlet*," and "The *Hamlet* Problem." Although the editors arbitrarily dismiss Romantic interpretations of Hamlet's character, they fall short of solving the "problem" either by questioning its validity or by concluding that Hamlet "is merely following the pattern of behavior of the thoughtful and speculative type of thinker" (p. xiii). But their observations are, in general, sound; and this series of single-play editions of Shakespeare is proving itself a valuable addition to the growing list of paperbacks.

CHARLES NORTON COE

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

RAPID READING, R. M. McCorkle and S. D. Dingus (Littlefield College Outlines, 1958, 131 pp., \$1.25). This paperback has a limited approach to reading, dealing mainly with eye movements, vocalization, and vocabulary building. Many of the exercises are ineffectual (those for eye span and phrase reading are the best), and too many of the selections are undergraduate themes.

RALPH M. WILLIAMS

TRINITY COLLEGE

THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Norton, 1958, 251 pp., paper, 95¢). This novel, hitherto available only in an omnibus, makes its appearance in the neat bright format of the Norton Library series. The introduction by Arlin Turner (Duke) reviews the facts and the sources and then proceeds judiciously to establish a reading of the romance (theme: the familiar one of isolation) that students and teachers may be more prepared to accept than the recent revaluations based on imagery and symbolism.

NINE PLAYS OF CHEKOV (Grosset and Dunlap, 248 pp., 1959, paper, 95¢). The four major plays, four one-acts, and one monologue in this volume make available to students an inexpensive collection of Chekov's major drama. A brief biography and a chronological table of Chekov's

life and works preface the plays. But the translations are dated, and newer, better ones are available almost as inexpensively—and published with greater quality—in Modern Library and Penguin Books.

GEORGE E. NICHOLS, III

TRINITY COLLEGE

PUBLICATION GUIDE FOR LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC SCHOLARS, Milton B. Byrd and Arnold L. Goldsmith (Wayne State, 1958, 146 pp., paper, \$1.95). Doubtless, the compilers (Southern Illinois and Wayne State) said: What every scholar and every library needs is a list of the 180-plus periodicals that print English scholarship, to supplement and be handier than the *PMLA* list printed a year or so ago. And indeed, every library and English scholar does need this vari-typed handbook, especially since it contains a foreword, by the William R. Parker who edited *PMLA*, on how to write the article before sending it to the 180 publications.

THE SHORES OF AMERICA, Sherman Paul (Illinois, 1958, 433 pp., \$6.75). This long, complex, and sometimes difficult book bears as its subtitle, "Thoreau's Inward Exploration." What Professor Paul (Illinois) risks in his attempt to get inside the life of the man who wrote the book that E. B. White has characterized as a "tale of simplicity . . . the best ever written and the cockiest," is something far more difficult than the usual scholarly study. Scholarly Professor Paul is; and he is deeply devoted to his subject. But the figure that emerges from the pages of "The Shores of America" is that of a man somewhat more ponderous in his intellectualism and somewhat less angular and rugged than his own book reveals him to be. It is good, nevertheless, to have a modern study of this kind. Professor Paul begins at the beginning, and touches upon almost everything that Thoreau wrote; and on the whole, he does not get carried away by his own "discoveries." He scants the political writings—he does not even mention "A Plea in Defense of Captain John Brown"; he has next to nothing to say about the poetry. In so long a study, such omissions as these are curious.

SAMUEL FRENCH MORSE  
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

**THE CHANGELING**, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, ed. N. W. Bawcutt (Harvard, 1958, 140 pp., \$3.50). The first volume in the Revels Plays series, whose aim "is to apply to plays by Shakespeare's predecessors, contemporaries, and successors the methods that are now used in Shakespeare editing." There is a re-examined text, modern spelling, long introduction, full notes at bottom of page, and a glossary, plus a general attempt to supply "the special needs of actors and producers . . . ."

**THREE GREAT PLAYS OF EURIPIDES: MEDEA, HIPPOLYTUS, HELEN**, trans. Rex Warner (New American Library, 1958, 192 pp., paper, 75¢). Reprint of Warner's three separate translations (1944-1951) with a new composite introduction.

**INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH**, Tyrus Hillway (Houghton Mifflin, 1956, 284 pp., n.p.l.). What every advanced student, graduate student, and academic researcher needs to absorb before being able to do full justice to "scholarship." Professor Hillway (Colorado State College of Education), a successful researcher of American literature, traces the history of research and graduate study, sets up the conditions and methods of investigation, surveys the various detailed techniques, and advises on final publication. Useful for any field, but especially English.

**THE PLAYWRIGHT'S ART: STAGE, RADIO, TELEVISION, MOTION PICTURES**, Roger M. Busfield (Harper, 1958, 260 pp., \$3). A competent primer marked by clarity, a bibliography asserted by the publishers to be "the most complete . . . available," and an excellent set of 72 exercises. By a teacher (Michigan State) journalist, radio-TV and playwright.

**SELECTIONS FROM THE TATLER AND THE SPECTATOR**, Addison and Steele, ed. Robert J. Allen (Rinehart, 1957, 268 pp., 75¢). Professor Allen (Williams) has written an Introduction that will help undergraduates "enter a world that is so clearly not ours." His selections, more generous than a period anthology can provide, give an excellent idea of the breadth of in-

terest of both these periodicals and their authors.

RALPH M. WILLIAMS

TRINITY COLLEGE

**A DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH SYNONYMS AND SYNONYMOUS EXPRESSIONS**, Richard Soule, ed. Alfred D. Sheffield (Little, Brown, 1959, 614 pp., \$4.95). This reprint of what Sheffield presumably did in 1938 to Soule's 1871 compilation looks extensive and is certainly handy, but only a complete collation would show its merits relative to Mawson's Roget. Soule has 36 synonyms for *paltry*, for example, where Roget has 8, but Roget's directions to *pity*, *poverty*, and *insignificance* might prove more helpful. And who but Roget will tell us, under *past*, that of *yore* or *erst* are poetic, or recall to us the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust?

**A GLOSSARY OF THE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW**, Paul Kozelka (Teachers College, Columbia, 1959, 55 pp., paper, \$1.50). **SHAW'S DRAMATIC CRITICISM** (1895-98), ed. John F. Matthews (Hill and Wang, 1959, 306 pp., paper, \$1.45). **SHAW ON THEATRE**, ed. E. J. West (Hill and Wang, 1959, 306 pp., paper, \$1.35). These volumes illuminate Shaw profitably for scholar and performer. Mr. Kozelka has compiled a useful glossary to help theatre students to "understand certain words and expressions which are uniquely Shavian or peculiarly British." Although some entries are admittedly familiar, the handbook provides understanding of special value to directors and actors. Mr. Matthews has intelligently undertaken for the modern reader a lively culling of what seems to him the most interesting of Shaw's *Saturday Review* criticism. His criteria of selections were those pieces where "the playwright-critic [was] commenting on his predecessors . . . , Shaw's reactions to the work of his contemporary rivals," and pieces which give "the fullest possible expression to his views on directing." The late Professor West's (Colorado) splendid volume, called "a selection of a selection," is a miscellany of articles, essays, speeches, and letters that bears tantalizing witness to the mint of Shaw on theatre (more pertinent and perceptive than much contem-

porary criticism) still to be collected.

GEORGE E. NICHOLS, III

TRINITY COLLEGE

TYPEE, Herman Melville (Harper, 1959, 389 pp., n.p.l.). Although Harper first rejected *Typee*, it took over publication in 1849 and is able to print it in the inexpensive hard-cover Modern Classics series from old plates. The short introduction by C. Merton Babcock (Michigan State) is all right, although it speaks of *Typee's* being "part of a larger unity which includes *Mardi*, *Moby Dick*, and *Pierre*" without showing just how it is. And we still need introductions that are not graceful essays but real teaching aids.

EDUCATIONAL STIMULI, Donald R. Honz (1124 Belknap St., Superior, Wisconsin). For those teachers who wish to supplement their textbooks or who wish separate work-sheets for special projects, Mr. Honz publishes a variety of forms and lists: library questionnaire, term paper guide, spelling demons, dictionary practice, and so on, plus a whole series of fifty Latin aids. While the standard is generally that of the secondary school, the stimuli may be useful to college teachers, especially the lists of 124 paragraph topics, 300 theme topics, and 341 speech topics.

THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, ed. D. J. K. (Hanover House, 1959, 615 pp., \$4.95). This is a usable collection because it has 72 short pieces as opposed to the 36 of the only other competitor, the Modern Library Giant edition of Hawthorne's fiction. On the other hand, the MLG has the five finished romances, found nowhere else together, and includes the only reprint of *Fanshawe*. Furthermore, the Hanover House volume, in omitting "those shorter pieces which cannot be truly termed short stories," never specifies its definition of a short story, so that it includes a dozen items which one might reject as short stories because they contain no central conflict. The result is that this book has a mixture of 72 pieces when it might almost as easily printed the whole 104 tales and sketches and essays of Hawthorne and been complete. The general reader may thus have

a good collection of Hawthorne fiction, but what teacher and students of Hawthorne need is either the whole set of *Twice-Told Tales*, *Mosses*, *Snow-Image*, and *Miscellaneous*, or else (much more preferable) a scholarly edition of the tales and sketches printed in the order of original publication with indication of possible order of composition. The mysterious editor, D. J. K., prints select tributes to Hawthorne by James, Poe, Trollope, and Holmes, but gives no other apparatus and no indication of what texts have been used. The field is still wide open.

THE ROMANCE OF THE RUBAIYAT, A. J. Arberry (Macmillan, 1959, 244 pp., \$5.75). 1859 saw the publication of two books especially destined to excite the Victorian world: *The Origin of Species* and *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. Although few of Darwin's readers found his book consoling, many spiritually weary Victorians at last realized contentment in FitzGerald's Epicurean retreat. However, Darwin's book was sold out the first day it appeared, but FitzGerald's elicited no public attention until 1869 when Charles Eliot Norton praised it in the pages of the *North American Review*. Soon the Omar cult spread throughout the world. Today some 600 editions of the *Rubáiyát* have been printed. For the centenary, Professor Arberry (Cambridge) tells the history of the *Rubáiyát's* reputation, prints for the first time a series of letters that passed between the English poet and his Persian teacher Edward Cowell, furnishes a scholarly commentary on the poem, and reprints a facsimile of the First Edition. His book throws valuable light on the genesis of FitzGerald's greatest work.

RICHARD P. BENTON  
TRINITY COLLEGE, CONNECTICUT

SPELLING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS, Joseph Mersand (Barron's Educational Series, 1959, 182 pp., 98¢). For the colleges who want to do something about the inability of their undergraduates to spell, and who have not just given up entirely and shrugged off the responsibility on the secondary schools, a good textbook has long been a desideratum. The available texts have been little more than rehashes

of material already at hand in the section on Orthography in the students' dictionaries. Dr. Mersand's (Queens College and Jamaica High School) book is a cut above these texts. His material falls quite naturally into three parts. Four chapters attempting to motivate the student properly are good except for the second, which emphasizes the fact that "English is probably the most difficult modern language to spell"—hardly a sound psychological approach and certainly not a sound linguistic statement. Eight chapters then elaborate upon the material in the dictionary, and provide good exercises. The final eight chapters provide much needed additional material, including some good word building work; the chapter on "How to Distinguish Between Homonyms," however, is merely a list of homonyms and their definitions, and the chapter on "Better Spelling by Ear" is disappointing. Students who really wish to learn to spell will, however, find this a helpful guide.

RALPH M. WILLIAMS

TRINITY COLLEGE

**THE INTIMATE HENRY MILLER** (New American Library, 1959, 191 pp., paper, 50¢). For those who admire courage, self-culture, and clear prose, this is a neat selection of essays and reflections. For others, it is somewhat less than stimulating, especially compared to Miller's fiction.

**PLAIN TALK FROM A CAMPUS**, John A. Perkins (Delaware, 1959, 195 pp., \$4). Dr. Perkins has assembled and edited a miscellany of his addresses and reports to which he has added some new material in order to give his book some coherency, but the effect is nonetheless that of a series of essays on a wide variety of subjects relating to higher education. However, since President (Delaware) Perkins has had a wide variety of experiences as a college professor, government administrator, and university president, he writes with authority. His observations are timely, with a modicum of post-Sputnik tocsin tolling going on in the background, and they contain a large measure of common sense.

ARTHUR H. HUGHES

TRINITY COLLEGE

**WILLIAM FAULKNER**, William Van O'Connor (Minnesota, 1959, 43 pp., paper, \$1). The third in the Pamphlets on American Writers series is just right as an introduction to the complex works. Furthermore, Professor O'Connor (Minnesota) has had the advantage of five years beyond his excellent longer book on Faulkner (1954) to change or clarify some facts and some opinions, and the result is something that any reader, novice or sophisticated, can profit by.

**MEMO TO A COLLEGE TRUSTEE: A REPORT ON FINANCIAL AND STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF THE LIBERAL COLLEGE**, Beardsley Ruml and Donald H. Morrison (McGraw-Hill, 1959, 94 pp., paper, \$1). This hard-headed analysis of the troubles of small colleges, commissioned by the Fund for the Advancement of Education, may prove to be one of the most influential reports ever issued in higher education. Mostly written by the noted economist (and trustee of Dartmouth) Ruml, with a chapter by the late Provost of Dartmouth, it insists that the financial problems of colleges can be solved by raising the teacher-student ratio to 20-1, lowering the teaching hours per week to nine, and raising faculty salaries from earmarked tuition income. Despite a few obiter dicta that will make faculty members jump, the report will mean most to teachers when it analyzes the values of different methods of instruction and the nature of faculty reaction to the changes that must come. In the near future, we may hear quoted a number of Rumisms like: "Let the richness of the educational experience be within the individual course, not within the range of departmental offerings."

**STUDIES IN HONOR OF JOHN WILCOX**, Members of the English Department, Wayne State University, ed. A. Dayle Wallace and Woodburn O. Ross (Wayne State, 1958, 269 pp., \$5). 18 papers, on subjects from *The Dream of the Road* to N.B.-William Ellery Leonard, to signal the retirement of a Wayne State English teacher whose professional hobby has been the building up of graduate work. The printing is especially handsome; the special papers will be assessed by specialists.

**MYTHS OF THE WORLD**, Padraic Colum (Grosset and Dunlap, 1959, 327 pp., \$1.65). Reprint of 1930 volume (*Orpheus*) which retells neatly the timeless major myths from 17 cultures, with 20 somewhat dated illustrations by Artzybasheff.

**SELECTIONS FROM THE WEALTH OF NATIONS**, Adam Smith, ed. George J. Stigler (Crofts Classics, 1957, 125 pp., 45¢). Although representing only one-ninth of the complete work, these selections are the most interesting to contemporary readers and most likely to encourage them to continue with the entire *Wealth of Nations*. The Introduction is brief and presupposes a degree of knowledge of economics not possessed, possibly, by many English majors.

RALPH M. WILLIAMS

TRINITY COLLEGE, CONNECTICUT

**THE ACADEMIC MARKETPLACE**, Theodor Caplow and Reece J. McGee (Basic, 1958, 262 pp., \$4.95). An investigation of the hiring and firing practices of ten big universities that shows definitively the unique double standard maintained in the profession of paying a man to do one job (teaching) while evaluating him on how well he does another (publishing research)—although without actually reading the research that the "teacher" actually publishes! The authors (sociologists at Minnesota and Texas) are very good on the sociology of the department and on types of chairmen (the Robber Baron, the Lord of the Mountain Fief, etc.), and finally on eleven practical recommendations for doing away with the inefficiency, hypocrisy, and strain of our present "professional" system.

**THE TRAGEDY OF OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE**, William Shakespeare, ed. Louis B. Wright (Pocket Library, 1957, 129 pp., paper, 35¢). A fine edition for the general course, what with the balanced and readable introduction, the notes and illustrations set on pages opposite the text, and the space left for writing in notes—by Wright of the Folger. The only drawback is the play itself, which suddenly seems to one reader a highly overrated melodrama.

**THE LITERARY SITUATION**, Malcolm Cowley (Viking, 1958, 259 pp., paper, \$1.25). Compass reprint of the 1954 survey of current criticism, war fiction, trends in fiction, naturalism, paperbacks, and how American writers live, by the clear-headed, clear-writing publicist who has had so much to do with current writing for forty years. The hundred-page "Natural History of the American Writer" could be required reading in creative writing and contemporary literature courses.

**INCREASING READING EFFICIENCY**, Lyle L. Miller (Holt, 1956, 303 pp., \$3.50). **MAINTAINING READING EFFICIENCY**, Lyle L. Miller (Holt, 1959, 284 pp., \$3.50). The generous supply of exercise material in the first of these books provides for the speeding up of word, phrase, and sentence perception. The reading selections are arranged to present problems in skimming, in finding the main idea, and reading critically. The second book contains thirty longer selections, several happily longer than can be found in other similar volumes (the range of length is 1700 to 10,600 words). These are designed to allow the student to apply at one time all the skills learned in the first book. These books should prove to be useful texts, although the comprehension exercises (at the back of the book) are not as challenging as the very interesting and well chosen selections.

RALPH M. WILLIAMS  
TRINITY COLLEGE

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF THE LITERATURE OF THE U. S. A.**, Clarence Gohdes (Duke, 1959, 102 pp., \$4; paper, \$2.50). Just what the doctor (Ph.D.) doctoral candidate, undergraduate student, and librarian ordered—the most complete critical listing, in 35 categories, of helpful books and articles on the subject ever published. One of the deans of American literary study, Professor Gohdes of Duke has drawn on his long professional career to save new generations of students the labor of finding the tools to make the scholarly artifacts. Teachers in the field now have their syllabuses ready made, and librarians can check and supplement their holdings with a minimum of hesitation. With two indexes and blank

pages for notes and additions, this is altogether the most usable handbook of 1959.

A TREASURY OF ASIAN LITERATURE, ed. John D. Yohannen (New American Library, 1958, 432 pp., paper, 50¢). Reprint of the fine 1956 anthology of Arabian, Iranian, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese selections arranged by type—Story, Drama, Song, and Scripture, with useful bibliographies and chronologies.

ONLY YESTERDAY, Frederick Lewis Allen (Bantam, 1959, 270 pp., paper, 50¢). Timely reprint of the 1931 classic; the edition is already in its third printing. With a short new introduction by Allen.

SELECTED READINGS IN CURRENT PROBLEMS: A SOURCE BOOK OF IDEAS FOR SPEECHES, ed. Harry P. Kerr (98 Forest St., Arlington 74, Mass., 1958, 99 pp., paper, \$1). Articles and speeches on segregation, freedom of expression, and education, mostly by well-known publicists.

THEY COME FOR THE BEST OF REASONS—COLLEGE STUDENTS TODAY, W. Max Wise (American Council on Education, 1958, 65 pp., paper, \$1). Prepared for the ACE's Commission on the College Student, this report should be required reading for all college teachers, administrators, and students. It presents the facts and figures of the new attitudes of pragmatism and materialism in the post-war generations of college men and women, and makes some suggestions for changing them (e.g., abandon the ridiculous system of grading, set up more independent study programs). With full notes and bibliography.

PAMELA: OR VIRTUE REWARDED, Samuel Richardson (Norton, 1958, 533 pp., paper, \$1.35). With a neat little introduction by William M. Sale (Cornell), emphasizing Pamela as the "new woman," with the "divided mind."

ENTRY E, Richard Frede (New American Library, 1959, 159 pp., paper 35¢). One of the best of the recent Cool Generation college (Yale here) novels has

been reprinted, with an inaccurate and inappropriate cover.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Benjamin Franklin, introduction by Dixon Weeter, and SELECTED WRITINGS, edited with an introduction by Larzer Ziff (Rinehart, 1959, 293 pp., paper). It is a useful selection that gives us the complete *Autobiography* and a varied sampling of the shorter works, ranging from the Dogood papers of the 1720's through the satires, political tracts, scientific letters, *bagatelles*, and hoaxes to the elderly wisdom and wit of the Speech in the Convention of 1787. Such is the range and variety necessary to see Franklin as something more than a composite image of Poor Richard, Horatio Alger, and an old benevolent puttering with bifocals. The late Dixon Weeter's informative review of Franklin's career and character supplements Larzer Ziff's (California) critical survey of such cultural and literary issues as Franklin's Puritan heritage, his use of *personae*, and its effects on his satire. An introduction that raises such questions and a selection extensive enough to provide at least tentative answers make this a valuable student anthology.

PAUL SMITH

TRINITY COLLEGE

THE MARBLE FAUN, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Pocket Books, 1958, 388 pp., paper, 35¢). A reprint, in the handy Pocket Library size, with a four-page introduction by Maxwell Geismar that reads the novel realistically and without mention of the Fortunate Fall.

MASTERPIECES OF THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE, ed. Angel Flores (Rinehart, 1957, 395 pp., paper). Although, regrettably, he has omitted poetry, Angel Flores (Queens) has assembled a good introduction to the important literary genres of this period, in which the popular and heroic are blended with the satiric and baroque in these well translated works. One's taste may prefer a *novela ejemplar* of Cervantes to the anonymous *Abencerraje*, or only one picaresque novel instead of two (*Lazarillo de Tormes* and Quevedo's *Don Pablos the Sharper*); however, an unexpected but welcome choice is the al-

legorical *auto sacramental* by Calderón, *The Great Theatre of the World*. Lope de Vega's popular *Fuente Ovejuna* and Tirso de Molina's *The Trickster of Seville* (Don Juan) complete the masterpieces, along with an informative introduction and a selected bibliography.

GUSTAVE W. ANDRIAN  
TRINITY COLLEGE

**HOW TO GET THE BEST EDUCATION FOR YOUR CHILD**, Benjamin and Lillian Fine (Putnam, 1959, 251 pp., \$3.95). In the interests of better articulation, college teachers should be interested in this practical analysis of the parental point of view of nursery school to college, by the former N.Y. *Times* education editor, now Dean of Education at Yeshiva, and his wife, parents of four.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE**, Vol. III, Jacob Blanck (Yale and Oxford, 1959, 482 pp., n.p.l.). The Eggleston-to-Harte volume of the magnificent project carried on for the Bibliographical Society of America with a grant from Lilly Endowment. Blanck is now one-third the way through the alphabet of pre-twentieth-century American writers, and up to item 7569, so that informed bibliographers and librarians may make informed guesses as to the total shelf-space.

**FRANK NORRIS: A BIBLIOGRAPHY**, Kenneth A. Lohf and Eugene P. Sheehy (Los Gatos, Talisman Press, 109 pp., \$5.75). The bibliographers (Columbia Library) have given students of American fiction a substantial descriptive listing of 51 individual works by Norris, a list of 234 other items by Norris, plus 238 writings about the novelist. There is also an index, an unusual item in such works.

**THE ILIAD OF HOMER**, trans. I. A. Richards (Norton, 1950, 1959, 208 pp., paper, 95¢). A shortened (four books, many passages, many epithets omitted) and modern (in a special sense) translation that should supplant the full versions now used in most Humanities and Comparative Literature courses. In a typically Ricardian introduction, in which he carries himself

away briefly on the wings of communication theory, Professor Richards (Harvard) explains how he has tried to keep the aural quality of the epic without keeping the artificial phrases of any literal translation.

**MEXICO CITY BLUES**, Jack Kerouac (Grove, 1959, 244 pp., paper, \$1.95). There are also cloth and limited editions of this collection of 242 poetic "jazz choruses"—a variety of impressionistic evocations of sporadic emotional reactions. Kerouac's poetry has the liveliness and the somewhat amusing satire of his Doctor Sax work, but it is not written by the artist (unconscious?) who produced *On the Road*.

**ANTHOLOGY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**, Edna Johnson, Evelyn R. Sickels, and Frances C. Sayers (Houghton Mifflin, 1959, 1239 pp., \$7.50). The third edition of this giant collection might have some interest for college teachers of English as well as for teachers of children and of primary education, for it seems to contain just about all the literature that the high school and college would ideally like to build on. Nursery rhymes, nonsense verse, texts from popular picture books, world fables and folk tales and myths, selections from ancient and medieval epic and romance, fantasy (i.e., from fairy tales to Tolkien's Hobbits), sacred writings and saints' legends, works on nature (Fabre, Thoreau, Hudson, Carson, etc.), biography, travel and history, real fiction, and real poetry are the categories of the selections, and each selection has a descriptive list of additional works, including secondary references "for the Adult" in some. There are over a hundred pages of appendix, including hints on storytelling, an illustrated history of children's literature with early examples, an article on illustrators with fine plates, a graded reading list, biographical sketches, pronouncing glossary, and a list of contents by ages and grades. Although this reviewer may never read the whole book, what he has read to two children and to himself so far has been well received.

**YOUR ADOLESCENT AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL**, Lawrence K. and Mary Frank (New American Library, 1959, 286

pp., paper, 50¢). Reprint of 1956 book that should interest college teachers as well as high school parents.

**CYRANO DE BERGERAC**, trans. Brian Hooker (Bantam Books, 1959, 196 pp., paper, 35¢). This is a tasteful reprint as a Bantam Classic of the classic English translation of the classic French drama, a classic volume for the classroom.

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J. M. SYNGE, 1871-1909, David H. Greene and Edward M. Stephens (Macmillan, 1959, 321 pp., \$6.95). This is an excellent work, not likely to be superseded, which is precisely what it claims to be: a biography—a biography, incidentally, which is especially illuminative wherever Synge's career merges with Abbey history. If its subject is revealed as no romantic hero, that is merely the result of rational interpretation of records. Professor Greene (New York University) seems clearly to deserve all essential credit for the study, even though his dead "collaborator's" unpublizable MS. was very useful. Reference bibliography and descriptive MS.-listing are about all, aside from correction of minor slips, scholars could desire in a second edition.

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**STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE**, Marchette Chute (New American Library, 1959, 319 pp., paper, 75¢). Mentor reprint of the 1956 lively redaction—with significant quotations—of all the plays.

**ON TRANSLATION**, ed. Reuben Brower (Harvard, 1959, 297 pp., \$6.50). Collected essays by translators on translating (e.g., Fitts, Lattimore, Humphries, O'Brien, Persé, and Fang), essays by scholars on the subject (e.g., Poggiali, Quine, Knight), and a critical bibliography.

**THREE GREEK PLAYS**: *Prometheus Bound*, *Agamemnon*, *The Trojan Women*, trans. Edith Hamilton (Norton, 1959, 239 pp., paper, 95¢). The welcome reissue of this distinguished trio of masterpieces can

make one regret only that Miss Hamilton's abundant talent for sensitive, lively translation has not been exercised on other classical versions. Among her informative forewords, Miss Hamilton discusses problems peculiar to rendering Greek verse into English. She sets herself the task of trying "to convey some of [her] own enthusiasm, something of the impression the poem made upon [her]" without departing from the way of the original. Although she makes no claims as a poet, Miss Hamilton consistently informs her translations with the true spirit of poetry. Spirited and lucid are the results, which play as well on the stage as they read in the library.

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